University Students' Academic Attainment:

The Influence of Public and Private Secondary

Schooling in Kuwait

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to compare the academic attainment of public and private school students at Kuwait University and to explore the reasons for the differences that were found.

In the first part of this study, a Kuwait University data set of three cohorts of students, which consisted of the final Grade Point Average (GPA) of 8619 university graduates, was analysed in order to determine whether there were significant differences in academic attainment between publicly and privately educated students. An analysis of the dataset revealed that the academic attainment of the students who had attended private secondary schools was statistically significantly higher than those who had attended public ones.

The second part of this study employed a mixed methods approach in order to try to determine why private schools students outperformed public school students in terms of the GPA at Kuwait University. Based on the literature review, an interview schedule was constructed and utilized in interviews with sixteen university students. Drawing on my analysis of these interviews, a questionnaire was designed in order to further explore the emerging issues. Two hundred and two students completed the questionnaire survey. Also, a deeper understanding of the key factors underlying the differences in academic attainment between the three cohorts of students was facilitated by interviews with five public and five private secondary school principals.

The findings of the questionnaire survey and principals' interviews suggest that school leadership practices, the quality of teaching, aspects of assessment and feedback and parental involvement are important factors in determining why private schools students outperformed public school students in terms of the

GPA at Kuwait University. Of crucial importance, as it permeates every aspect of its policies and practices, is a school's mission – its aspirations for its pupils.

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I would also like to thank the students and principals who generously participated in this study, and without whom this research would not have been possible.

This thesis is dedicated to my mothers' soul

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Introduction

The influence of previous schooling experiences on future academic attainment was the subject of a lecture I attended in 2008, when I was studying for an MA in Education at Kuwait University. For one assignment, the lecturer - my tutor - asked me to present a paper comparing the academic attainment of graduates at Kuwait University from public (state) schools with those from private schools. I started searching for studies related to a comparison between these two systems that had been conducted either in Kuwait or in the countries that are, to a great extent, considered similar to the Kuwaiti culture, namely the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), of which the State of Kuwait is a member. Surprisingly, I found only one study that had compared the attainment of public school students with those from private schools at university level in GCC countries.

This study was conducted in Saudi Arabia by Almqoci (2000) and was designed to identify the differences in university academic attainment of students who had finished public secondary schools and students who had finished private schools, depending on their mathematics scores in their first semester at university. The study found no statistical differences in university academic attainment between the students of the said two systems (see Chapter 3 for further discussion of this research).

In presenting the assignment to my tutor, I was critical of Almqoci's study. In comparing the university academic attainment of students of public and private schools, Almqoci used only the parameter of a single mathematics-standardized

test while standardized tests only measure facts that are stored in the short-term memory (National Coalition of Education Activists, 1999). Also, Almqoci (2000) provided no possible explanations for his results. Thus, and since no comprehensive study had been conducted either in Kuwait nor in GCC countries in such an important field, I identified a gap in knowledge pertaining to the relative academic attainment of public and private school students at Kuwait University which would have significance for other educational systems in GCC and beyond.

1.2 The Research Project

The study which I undertook for my PhD took place between May 2010 and May 2013. It had two key parts which are briefly presented below. The research design is discussed in full in Chapter 5.

1.2.1 Part 1

In Kuwait, the commonly held view has been that private school students do better academically than public school students at Kuwait University (Watfa & Motawaa, 2008). This might explain why the proportion of Kuwaiti students enrolled in private schools jumped from 3% in 1995 to 27% in 2010 despite the fact that public schools are free at all education stages (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2010). However, there has been no empirical research in Kuwait to verify this commonly-held perception.

Consequently, I engaged with the relevant literature in order to address how I could examine university academic attainment (see Chapter 3 - Section 1). Having reviewed the related literature, I learnt that university academic

attainment is commonly defined in terms of the performance of the student in his or her courses, which are given corresponding grades. These grades are assumed to reflect the kind of effort and knowledge that the student brings to his or her university courses (Schlesser & Finger, 1963). Academic attainment at university has been traditionally measured using the student's Grade Point Average (GPA) (Blackstone, 1994; Greene & Kang, 2004; Horowitz & Spector, 2005). The university GPA is computed according to the number of unit credits of a given course and multiplying the number of units with the subject grade. All of the resulting course grades are averaged to produce the student's final GPA, i.e. at the end of their degree programme (Schlesser & Finger, 1963).

As a consequence of reviewing the related literature, it was decided that university academic attainment in my study would be investigated using the final GPA of Kuwait University's graduates. The main aim of this investigation was to address the following research question:

> *"Is there a statistically significant difference in the academic attainment of publicly and privately educated students at the University of Kuwait in terms of their GPA at the end of their degree programme?"*

This research question was investigated through a statistical analysis of Kuwait University's database (Part 1 of my study). The academic attainment of 8619 graduates was investigated using the final GPA of students graduating in three different years: 2008, 2009, and 2010.The aims, methodology and findings of this statistical investigation are presented in detail in Chapter 4.

As will be discussed in Chapter 4, the analysis of Kuwait University's dataset provided evidence of statistical differences between privately and publicly educated students, in terms of their final GPA, in favour of private school students.

1.2.2 Part 2

The first Part of my study appeared to confirm the common belief of students' parents that private school students academically outperform their counterparts from public schools in terms of their final GPA at Kuwait University and this, in turn, means that public school students might be at a disadvantage in this regard. As a researcher, a public school teacher and indeed as a father, I wanted to gain a deeper understanding to this phenomenon. As the statistical investigation I had conducted could not explain the reasons for the statistical differences in the academic attainment between the students of the said two systems, I identified a further research question, which provided the focus for the main body (Part 2) of my study:

> *"Why do privately educated students academically outperform publicly educated students at Kuwait University in terms of their GPA at the end of their degree programme?"*

In order to find possible explanations for the statistically significant differences between the academic attainment of public and private school students at Kuwait University, I started again investigating the relevant literature. In many developed countries, the debate on private versus public education has led to numerous studies on why the type of school might influence academic attainment, especially secondary school education. Some have also taken a

longer-term view and considered how school level factors in the secondary phase may affect university academic attainment. As will be discussed in Chapter 3 – Section 1, the majority of studies in this field reported that there is a difference in the university academic attainment of students from private and public secondary schools: students from private secondary schools tend to do better academically than public secondary school students (e.g. Schlesser & Finger, 1963; Ridell, 1993; Epple, Figlio & Romano, 2004). The literature can be divided in this respect into two main sections: (a) studies that attributed the private school students' academic superiority to school-level factors such as school leadership, teacher effectiveness and parental involvement etc. (e.g. Quah, Lim & Brook, 2010); and (b) studies that attributed higher levels of academic achievement to the social class and background of students' families and not to the schools as such (e.g. Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Bedi & Garg, 2000; Buddin, Cordes & Kirby, 1998).

However, Kuwait is culturally very different from western countries where most of the relevant studies had been carried out. When I started my study I strongly believed that social class, identified as a key influence in studies of academic attainment in Western literature, was not relevant in the Kuwaiti context (see Chapter 2). According to Alazemi (1999, p.47) "The Kuwait society is an affluent [one], and its social system is a relatively homogenous social system because Kuwait does not have clearly defined or developed social classes". It is also noticeable that almost all Kuwaiti parents are well-off and are able to enrol their children in private schools, if they wish to (Alazemi, 1999).

So, both as a teacher and a Kuwaiti citizen, I believed that the explanation of the academic differences between the students of the said two systems was likely to lie with the nature and quality of the secondary schools the students had attended. I therefore engaged with a key field of literature which is the school effectiveness literature (this is explored in detailed in Chapter 3 – Section 2)

Although I had had a tendency to be a positivist, engagement with the abovementioned related literature convinced me that, in order to address "why" privately educated students outperform publicly educated students at Kuwait University, I should adjust my positivistic stance and adopt a more pragmatic approach. Indeed, the relevant literature suggests that the comparison between public and private schools is a complex social phenomenon and I believed that it was very unlikely that I could gain a deep understanding of such a phenomenon using quantitative methods only (see Chapter 5). Hence, in Part 2 of my study (Chapter 6 & 7), a combination of qualitative and quantitative investigations was administered to determine why private school students academically outperformed their counterparts from public schools at Kuwait University. Interviews were conducted with sixteen university students and a questionnaire survey of 202 university students was also carried out. A further important element of the research design was the interviews with five public and five private secondary school principals to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. The methodology for Part 2 of my study is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Previous studies of the differences of student outcomes between private and public schools at university have mainly been conducted in the USA, Europe and some parts of Asia (Bedi & Garg, 2000; Horowitz & Spector, 2005; Giannangelo & Franceschini, 2009; Sackett et al., 2009). Since no such studies have been conducted in the State of Kuwait, the main significance of this study is that it will attempt to fill a geographical gap in knowledge about the university academic attainment of private and public school students which may also have relevance for GCC countries and beyond. The study will also provide insights into whether school effectiveness theories developed in the west are transferable to different contexts and cultures.

A key aim of this study is to attempt to provide stakeholders such as policy makers, parents, students, school principals and teachers with a better understanding of the differences between private and public secondary schools and the final chapter includes some recommendations for policy and practice.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

Description of the structure of the thesis is set out below:

➤ Chapter 1 (Introduction - the current Chapter): I explain and justify the choice of my research problem. I also briefly explain how I addressed the first research question and found evidence of statistically significant differences in academic attainment between public and private school students at Kuwait University. I then pose and justify the main research question, which is: "Why do private school students performed academically

better at Kuwait University, as measured by their final GPA?" I also introduce the two main bodies of literature with which I will engage in Chapter 3.

➤ Chapter 2 (The Educational System in Kuwait): For the information of the reader, this chapter begins with a brief historical background of the State of Kuwait. It also describes the educational system in Kuwait and discusses the development of public and private schools in the State. The administration of Kuwaiti schools and the general objectives of secondary schooling in Kuwait are presented. Further, the structure of higher education in Kuwait is described. Chapter 2 ends with a brief presentation of the challenges currently facing the Kuwaiti education system.

➤ Chapter 3 (The Literature Review). This chapter consists of two sections. In the first section, I present and discuss studies that compare the academic attainment of public and private school students at school and at university. The first section ends with the two conclusions: (1) the students' final GPA is an appropriate means for measuring the university academic attainment and (2) including the extent to which public and private schools prepare their students for university is a worthwhile factor for investigation. Section 2 comprises a review of the school effectiveness literature. This includes a discussion of the characteristics of effective schooling. Three key characteristics are extracted from the relevant literature; school leadership, teacher effectiveness and parental involvement. I discuss how the review of literature generated further research questions.

➤ Chapter 4 (University Attainment of Publicly and Privately Educated Students): This Chapter presents Part 1 of my study in which I conducted a

statistical analysis of Kuwait University's student database to determine whether there are statistical differences in the final GPA scores of publicly and privately educated school students. The methodology and the profile of Kuwait University's students are explained. Then I introduce and test two research hypotheses.

➢ Chapter 5 (Methodology): In this Chapter, I will tell the story of my paradigmatic shift from positivism to pragmatism and how this shaped Part 2 of my study. I will describe and justify my research design for Part 2, which comprised two phases. The research instruments, data collection and data analysis are discussed in detail. There is also consideration of ethical issues, and the personal and methodological challenges I encountered during the course of the study.

➢ Chapter 6 (Students' Perceptions and Experiences of their Secondary school): presents the first phase of the second part of my study. Phase 1 consisted of two stages and this section is correspondingly divided into two. The first sub-section discusses the findings from the interviews with 16 students. In the second sub-section, I present the findings of the questionnaire survey of 212 university students.

➢ Chapter 7 (Public and Private Schools: The Experience and Perspective of School Principals): This chapter reports the findings from the second phase of Part 2 of my study - the interviews with ten school principals (five from public schools; five from private schools).

➢ Chapter 8 (Discussion): In this chapter the discussion of the findings set out in Chapters 6 and 7 is structured using the three key characteristics of effective schools discussed earlier (i.e. school leadership, teacher

effectiveness and parental involvement), as well as the fourth dimension which was derived from reviewing public and private school literature, namely the extent to which students and principals believed their school prepared students for university.

➢ Chapter 9 (Conclusion): In this chapter, and based on the findings of the study, I make conclusion and suggest implications for policy and practice. The study's contribution to knowledge is addressed. Recommendations for further research are also outlined.

In the next chapter I describe and discuss the context for my study: the state of Kuwait and its education system.

CHAPTER 2: THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN KUWAIT

2.1 Introduction

As stated in the previous Chapter, this study contributed to knowledge as there has been little research undertaken into the education system in Kuwait and no exploration of whether theories of school effectiveness, based largely on studies in western countries, are useful in understanding the Kuwaiti situation. Indeed, Kuwait is very different from Western nations politically, economically, socially and culturally, and to understand issues relating to education in Kuwait there is a need to have a sense of the Kuwaiti context in general. This chapter provides an overview of the Kuwaiti context and it begins with a brief description of the development of the State.

2.2 Kuwait: Location and a Brief Historical Background

Kuwait is a hot and dry desert country of 17,818 square kilometers. It is located in the northwest of the Arabian Gulf and is bounded by Iraq to the north and west, Iran to the east across the Arabian Gulf, and Saudi Arabia to the south (Al-Aidarous, 2002).

Politically, Kuwait is a constitutional monarchy under the reign of the Al-Sabah royal family. The head of state (the prince) runs the country with a council of ministers and an elected parliament (Al-Ghafoor, 1983). In 1961, Kuwait declared its independence from the United Kingdom and joined the League of Arab States and the United Nations.

Although the oil fields in Kuwait were discovered in the 1930s, the oil industry grew most quickly after the country gained its independence from the UK. Nowadays, petroleum products account for more than 90% of export revenues. According to the World Bank, Kuwait is categorized as a high-income economy with approximately $48,000 GDP per capita (World Bank, 2011, cited in Ministry of Education, 2011).

In 2009, the population of Kuwait was approximately 3.5 million, 2.1 million of whom were males and 1.4 million females. The Kuwaitis comprise only 32.1% of the whole population; the rest are foreign nationals and comprise 67.9% (Ministry of Education, 2011).

2.3 Development of Public Education in the State of Kuwait

Like all Islamic countries, public education in the State of Kuwait originated from the mosques, and the Imams were the first teachers. Their goal was to teach the public the teachings of the Holy Quran and to discuss the principles and foundations of Islam.

After some time, in 1887, the 'Katatib' came into being which were similar to small community schools. The teacher of males was called the Mullah while that of females was called the Mullayah. The Katatib sizes depended on the reputation of their Mullahs. The class size of a good Mullah would reach more than 30 students while the allocation of other Mullahs would be ten students or so. The main focus of the Katatib was to teach Islam, reading, writing and arithmetic. The system of the Katatib had no age limit for beginning or completing them. Once the student was able to read and write, they would leave them to pursue their own interests (Al-Aidarous, 2002).

The Katatib existed as the main form of schooling for most Kuwaiti children, and then they were replaced by Al-Mubarakiya School for boys in 1911. The Al-Mubarakiya School was initiated by a collective effort of Kuwaiti merchants in the reign of the prince Sheikh Mubarak Al-Kabeer. Although it was not established by governmental effort, and nominal fees were collected from the students, the Al-Mubarakiya School is regarded as the first public school in the State of Kuwait. After almost a decade, Al-ahmadyah School was built, and was ordered by the prince of Kuwait, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to be the first governmental school. These two schools were the precursors to the development of the public education system in the State of Kuwait as they were open to all male citizens. As for the females, Al-Woustta was the first school for girls, built in 1936.The curricula of these schools included Islamic education, Islamic history, Arabic language, geography and arithmetic (Al-Mgadi, 2008).

The years that followed saw further development and enhancement of the public education system in the state. The Council of Education, which was a kind of small Ministry of Education, was formed in 1936 to manage and supervise the public schools in the state. Curricula were developed by the Council of Education in order to guide and standardize the teaching of skills and subjects. The number of public schools steadily rose, from a handful to 24 schools in 1949. However, these schools were at primary level and although there was not any law that regulated the age limit of the students, they received students aged from six years old and the students usually finished at age 12 (Al-Kandari et al, 2003).

In 1953, the first secondary school for males was founded and was called Al-Shwaikh School. Likewise, in the same year, Al-Murgab was the first secondary school for females. It was not until 1955 that the education system was divided into three stages. The duration of study in each stage was four years, in addition to the two years of kindergarten level, which was established later in 1955 (Ministry of Education, 2011). These levels were presented as follows:

Primary level

The age range of this level was 6-10 years old. The curriculum includes Islamic education, Arabic Language, Science, Mathematics, Social Sciences, National Education, Physical Education, Art and Music.

Intermediate level

The age range of this level was 10-14 years old. The curriculum includes Islamic Education, English Language, Arabic Language, Science, Mathematics, Social Sciences, National Education, Physical Education, Art and Music.

Secondary level

The age range of this level was 14-18 years old. When a student reached aged 16, they had to choose between two specialisms: Literacy or Science. In addition to the above-mentioned curriculum at intermediate level, the curriculum of Science Specialism includes: Advanced Mathematics, Biology, Geology, Physics and Chemistry. In the Literacy specialism, the subjects of Science are replaced by French Language, History, Geography, Philosophy and Psychology.

In 1961, the constitution of the State of Kuwait was set. Article 13 of Chapter 2 of the constitution stipulates that the state is to provide and supervise education. Article 10 of Chapter 2 states that the State is responsible for the youth. Article 40 of Chapter 3 stipulates that education is a right for all citizens at all stages (Hilmi, 1989).

In 1965, the government decreed that education was to be compulsory for both genders aged 6-14 years old and free to its citizens at all stages, from kindergarten to higher education, hence the dramatic rise in the number of public schools in the country (Al-Kandari et al, 2003).

It should be noted that public schools are only available for Kuwaiti nationals and that non-Kuwaiti students are allowed to use public education only when one of their parents is a university lecturer, a public school teacher, a doctor or a diplomat. Otherwise, non-Kuwaitis have to send their children to a private school (Houssan, et al., 2002).

At present, the number of public schools continues to increase in order to accommodate more students due to the increasing population in the country. Figure 2.1 presents the current number of schools in the country in 2010. The Kuwaiti citizens in 2010 numbered merely 1.12 million and when compared to the number of public schools, it becomes evident that the Kuwaiti government is committed to its goal of providing access to public education for all of its citizens (Ministry of Education, 2011). It has to be mentioned here that the

above-mentioned education stages were changed in 2004 to two years for kindergarten schools, five years for primary schools, four years for intermediate

schools and three years for secondary schools. The main reason for this change was to extend the duration of compulsory education and hence this became from 4-15 years of age for both genders. Another important development of Kuwaiti public schools has been the Kuwaitization of public school teachers (Alwatan, 2011).

Figure (2.1) The number of public schools in 2010 - Ministry of Education

- Planning and Information in 2011.

Number of Public Schools by Phase

Kindergarten - Age (4-6): 197	Primary - Age (6-11): 244	Intermediate - Age (11-15): 197	Secondary - Age (15-18): 133	Total: 767
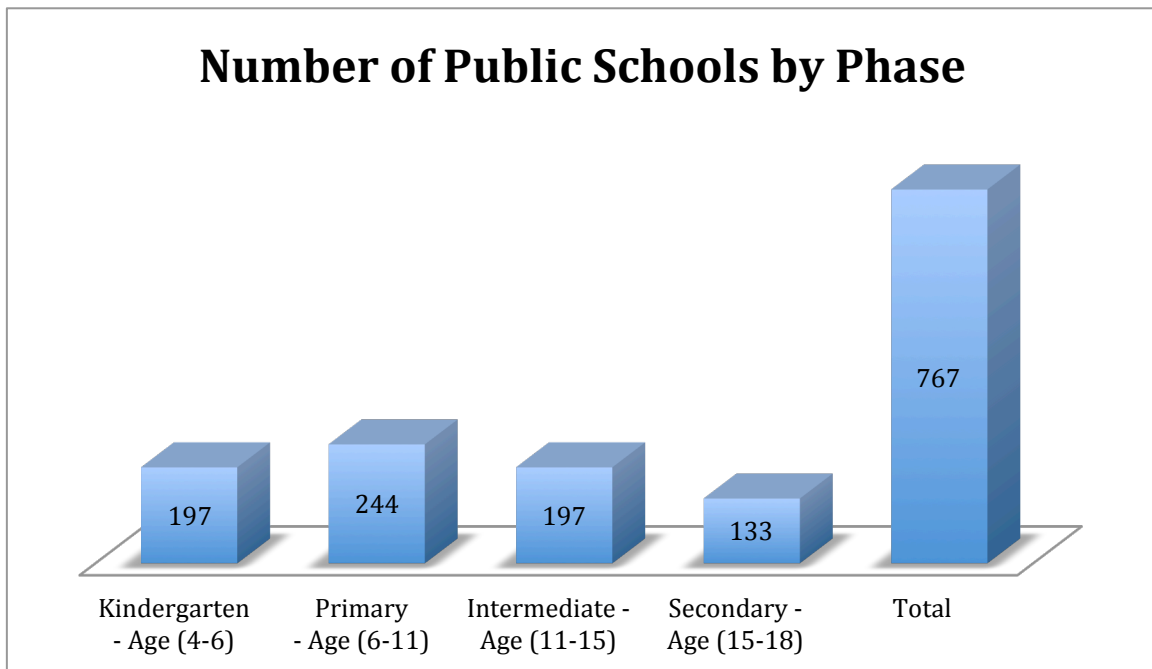
2.4 Development of Private Education in the State of Kuwait

After the discovery of the first oil field in Kuwait in 1934, many European and Arabic families came to Kuwait to join the workforce of Kuwait petroleum companies. Since public education was provided for Kuwaiti nationals, for non-Kuwaitis, with very few exceptions, private schools were established to meet the educational needs of these immigrants' children. However, the number of

private schools established in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s was fewer than 20 schools (Houssan, et al., 2002).

The influx of Arab people into the State of Kuwait increased greatly after the war in 1967. The varied nationalities that came and settled into the country necessitated the requirement for more schools that would cater to their children's cultural needs in education. Hence, more and more Arabic, British, American, Pakistani and Indian schools were established. As a result, in 1967 the government issued its first ruling on the creation and regulation of private schools in the country (Houssan, et al., 2002).

As implied above, the development and progress of private schools in the country fell into two types: Arab private schools and foreign private schools. Arab private schools were developed in accordance with the Ministry of Education and the country's educational standards and curriculum. Foreign private schools did not adopt the prescribed curriculum of Kuwait and were directed at the non-Arab communities in the country. They adopted the curriculum of their country of origin, such as American, British, Indian and Pakistani schools among others. Some Kuwaiti students, however, choose to attend these schools because they think that the quality of teaching in these schools is better than in Kuwaiti public schools (Alazemi, 1999).

In 1979 an Emiri Decree was issued determining that private schools (both Arabic and foreign) would come under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. This determines that these foreign schools are obliged to follow the general guidelines and standards of the Ministry of Education such as class size and minimum requirements for employing teachers. Also, these foreign schools

are obliged to offer the ministry's curricula in the Arabic language and Islamic education to their Muslim students (Al- Ghafoor, 1983).

Nowadays, 38% of the schools in Kuwait are private while 62% of schools are public (Ministry of Education, 2011). Figure 2.2 shows the number of private schools in Kuwait in 2010.

Figure (2.2) The number of private schools in 2010 - Ministry of Education

- Planning and Information in 2011.

Number of Private Schools by Phase

Kindergarten - Age (4-6)	108
Primary - Age (6-11)	134
Intermediate - Age (11-15)	133
Secondary - Age (15-18)	99
Total	474
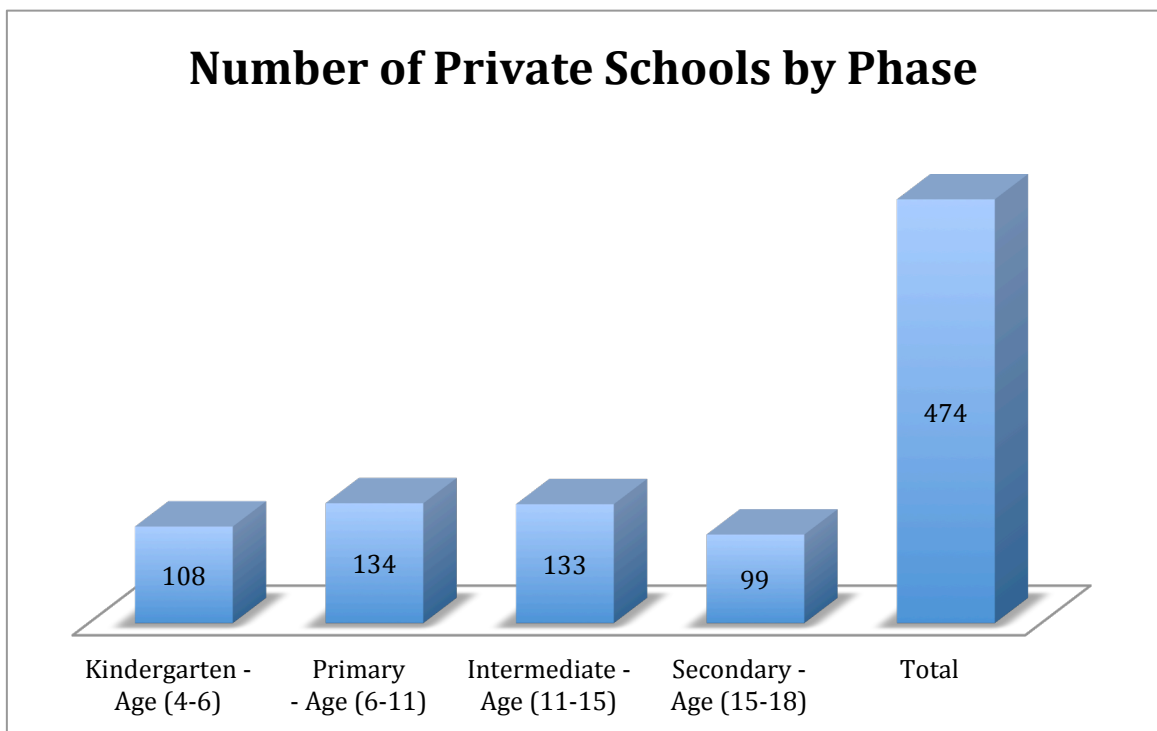
2.5 Percentage of Students Enrolled in the Public and Private Schools

Figure 2.3 presents the numbers and percentages of students enrolled in public schools, across all levels, in 2010 and categorized by gender. The chart shows that there were 347,422 students enrolled in public schools. The percentage of males was slightly smaller than that of females.

Figure (2.3) The number of students enrolled in public schools in

2010 - Ministry of Education - Planning and Information in 2011.

Numbers of Students Enrolled in Public Schools

165592	181830	347422
Males	Females	Total
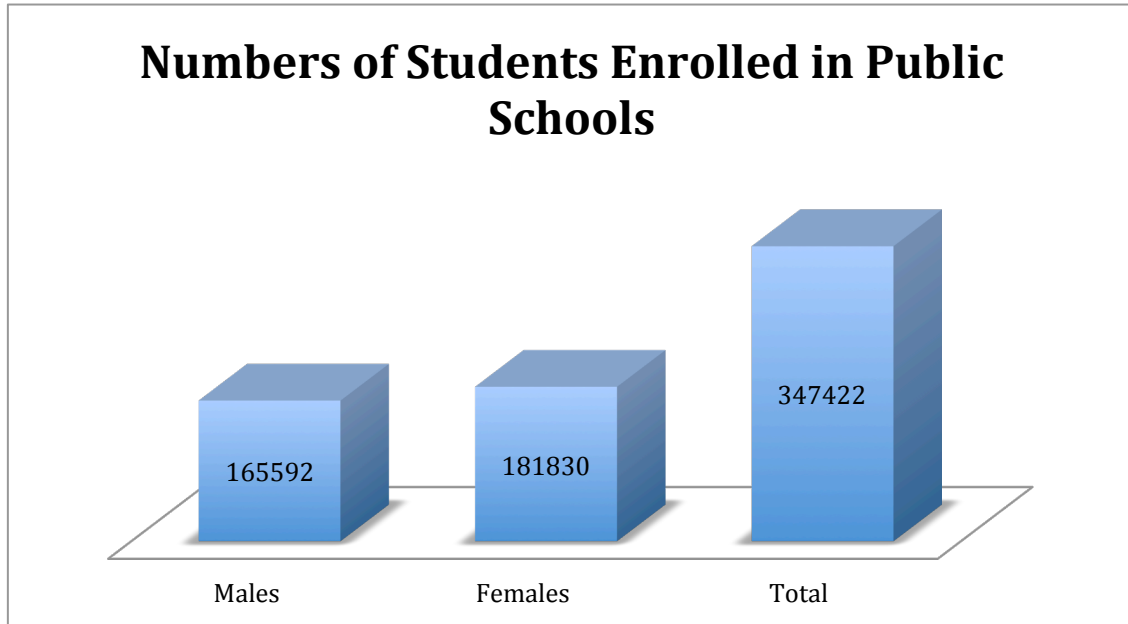
Figure 2.4 presents the number and percentage of students enrolled in private schools in 2010 and categorized by gender. The chart shows that there were199, 698 students enrolled in private schools of which 27% were Kuwaiti nationals. Unlike public schools, the percentage of males registered in private schools was greater than that of females.

Numbers of Students Enrolled in Private Schools

Males	Females	Total
111619	88079	199698

Figure 2.5 presents the percentage of students from all nationalities enrolled in public and private schools in 2010. The chart shows that about two-thirds of the students in Kuwait were registered in public schools.

Figure (2.5) The percentage of students in public and private schools in 2010,

Ministry of Education - Planning and Information in 2011.

Percentage of Students Enrolled in Public and Private Schools

Private Schools
36%

Public Schools
64%

- Public Schools
- Private Schools
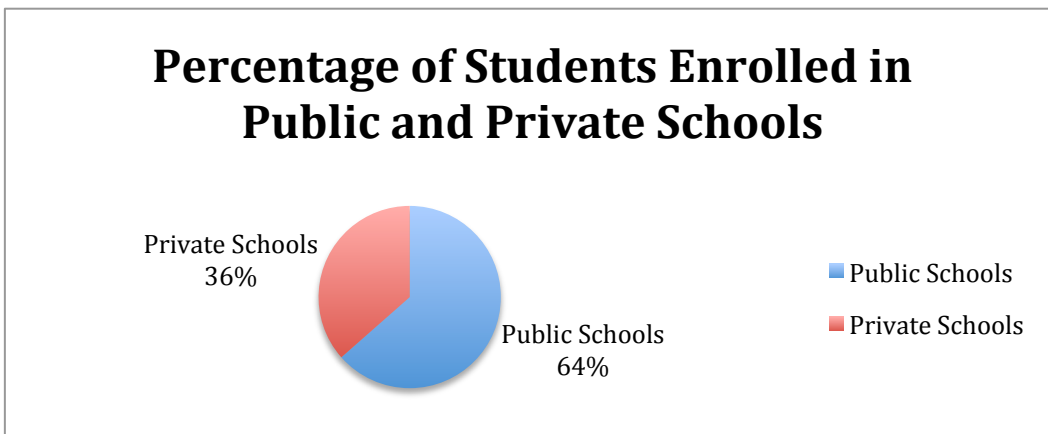
2.6 The Administration of Kuwaiti Schools

There are three levels of educational administration in Kuwait: the central education administration, the local education administration (the educational districts) and the school administration (Alenazi, 1999).

2.6.1 The central education administration

This level consists of the Supreme Council of Education and the Ministry of Education. The Supreme Council of Education is a consultative body for the Ministry of Education. These consultations include proposing the educational policies of the state, amending the durations of the academic years of all educational levels (except higher education) and providing the Ministry of Education with consultations in relation to different educational affairs.

The Ministry of Education, on the other hand, is the educational body that is responsible for the implementation of the educational policies as well as supervising public and private schools. Also, the Ministry of Education's functions include setting the strategies for achieving the educational goals, updating curricula, teachers' training and solving the managerial problems of the whole body of education (Alenazi, 1999).

Among many undersecretaries, there are two in the Ministry of Education, one of whom is the undersecretary of public education and the other is the undersecretary of private education. However, while there is a wide range of responsibilities of the undersecretary of public education, the responsibilities of the undersecretary of private education are mainly restricted to issuing governmental licenses for establishing new private schools as well as

supervising existing private schools. In other words, the power of the undersecretary of public education is much greater compared with the undersecretary of private education.

2.6.2 The local education administration (the educational districts)

In 1975, and as a procedure towards decentralization, the Ministry of Education issued a decree, based on which local educational districts were established. Six educational districts were established according to the geographical distribution of the six governorates in Kuwait. The purpose of the establishment of these educational districts was to pay a closer supervision to schools and to facilitate the schools' mission by supplying these schools with the support they need to achieve the educational goals (Houssan, et al., 2002).

It has to be mentioned here that the six educational districts are only responsible for public schools and are headed by the undersecretary of public education. Private schools, on the other hand, are supervised only by the administration of private schools and do not follow the districts' system and this, unlike public schools, offers them a great deal of autonomy in setting their own policies and practices (Houssan, et al., 2002).

2.6.3 The school administration

The third administration level is the school administration. The principals are at the head of this administration and their main mission is to achieve the educational goals set for them by the Ministry of Education and the Supreme Council of Education. Figure 2.6 shows the managerial structure of all public schools and most private ones in Kuwait.

Although no statistics are available on the managerial structure of private schools, I noticed that most private schools - four out of the five private schools I visited in my study- employ one deputy instead of two, as implemented in public schools. Another important observation is that the Ministry of Education was found to employ the principals of *Arabic* private schools and their function includes supervision of these private schools (see Chapter 7). The owners of *foreign* private schools, on the other hand, employ their own principals who have to have a BA in education in order to obtain a licence from the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education supervises these foreign private schools through its teacher supervisors who visit these schools without prior notification (see Chapter 7).

Figure (2.6) The typical Public school managerial structure in Kuwait (Alenazi, 2007).
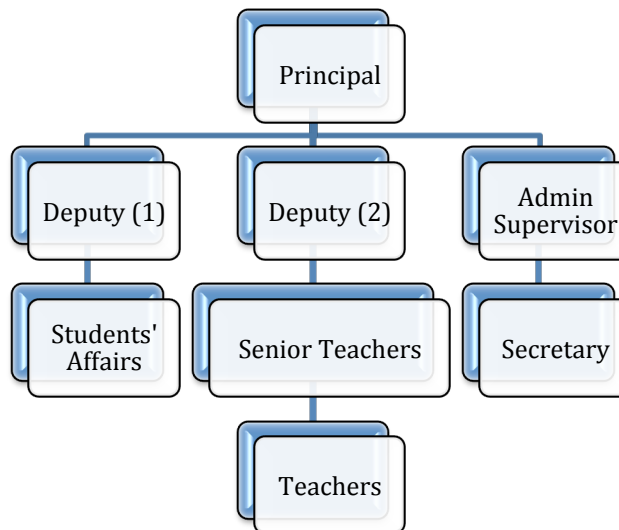
2.7 The Comprehensive Objective of Education in Kuwait

The Ministry of Education issued a document in 1976 stating the general objectives of education in Kuwait. According to this document, the general objective of education in Kuwait is 'to help all learners achieve comprehensive and integrated spiritual, mental, social, psychological and physical growth to the maximum of their abilities and possibilities; to enable them to achieve self-fulfilment and to participate in realizing the programmes of Kuwaiti society in particular and those of the Arab and Islamic world, as well as humanity in general' (Alghannam, 2003, p. 17).

2.8 The General Objectives of Secondary Education in Kuwait

The general objectives of secondary education cover five components of growth. These are cited in Houssan et al. (2002) and I translated them from Arabic to English as follows:

Spiritual growth:

The development of a positive attitude of the learner towards his/her God and his/her faith protects him/her from the cultural invasion and enhances his/her ability to practise the teachings of Islam and to promote membership of the Arab-Islamic culture.

Mental development:

Learners' knowledge of the foundations of sound thinking, and their awareness of the fact of the integration of knowledge, and their appreciation of science and

scientists help them develop the skills necessary to continue in the process of self-learning and leisure-time investment.

Psychological development:

Enlightening the learner about their potential and capabilities helps them accept themselves and others, and enhances their abilities of psychological and social compatibility.

Social development:

A learner's knowledge of the underlying foundations of his/her society and its contemporary problems promotes their positive attitudes towards their home country and enhances their ability to participate effectively in meeting the needs of their society and in the formation of sound social relationships.

Physical growth:

A learner's knowledge of the functions of their physiological organs helps them accept the physical changes and demands at this stage and develop good health habits.

2.9 Higher Education in Kuwait

Higher education in Kuwait comes under the control of the Ministry of Higher Education and is offered by the following institutes (Houssan, et al., 2002):

2.9.1 Kuwait University:

Kuwait University is the largest free public higher education institute in Kuwait. It was founded in 1966 and at the time of its establishment it consisted of four

colleges: College of Science, College of Arts, College of Education and College for Women. Since then, the number of colleges has been increasing and nowadays the university consists of 12 undergraduate colleges. Kuwait University caters for over 30,000 students, of which 91.8% are Kuwaiti nationals. The reason why the vast majority of the students are Kuwaiti nationals is that Kuwait University is only available for Kuwaiti nationals while there are conditions to be met for non-Kuwaiti students to join it. It is widely noticed that private school students prefer scientific colleges because the graduates of these colleges enjoy better employing opportunities as well as better salaries (Kuwait Civil Service Commission, 2012).

The university awards Bachelors' and Masters' degrees. Recently, the university has opened new programmes granting PhD degrees (Kuwait University, 2012). In 2012, almost 35% (9000) of the cohort of public and private school graduates was admitted to Kuwait University (Alwatan, 2011). Since Kuwait University requires achieving a pass mark of 80% and above at secondary school, it can be said that only higher achievers can join it. Students with less than 80% are likely to choose to attend one of the following institutes.

2.9.2 The Public Authority for Applied Education and Training:

The Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) is considered as the second main higher educational institute in Kuwait. It was established in 1982 and it consists of 15 colleges and institutes. The goal of PAAET is 'to develop the national technical manpower and to meet human resource needs of the country through its two sectors: Education and Training' (Houssan, 2002, p.131). The PAAET mainly grants Diplomas although it also offers a few

Bachelors' degrees. In 2012, the parliament passed a law according to which, one of the PAAET colleges (College of Basic Education) is to be the nucleus of the establishment of a new public university called Jaber University (Alwatan, 2012). PAAET requires achieving a pass mark of 50% and above at secondary schools as a primary requirement for admission.

2.9.3 Private Universities:

In 2000, the Kuwaiti parliament passed a law under which the private sector was allowed to establish private universities (Ministry of Higher Education, 2012). Since then, a number of private universities have opened such as the Gulf University, the American University of Kuwait, the Australian University of Kuwait, Box Hill College Kuwait and the Arabian Open University (Alwatan, 2012). The Council of Private Universities, of which the minister for higher education is the president, supervises these universities. The Council also sets laws, procedural rules and regulations governing the work of these universities. However, the capacity of these universities is limited as together they cater for only 17,000 students in total (Ministry of Higher Education, 2012). Most of these universities require students to achieve 60% and above at secondary schools as a requirement for admission.

2.10 Some Challenges Faced by the Current Kuwaiti Education System

In 2007, the Kuwait Assembly conducted a study, with technical support from the World Bank, entitled "Problems of Public Education in Kuwait" (Kuwait Assembly, 2012). This study revealed the following problems in the education system in Kuwait:

- ➢ The wages and salaries comprised up to 80% of the budget of the Ministry of Education.
- ➢ Low success rates.
- ➢ Weak and unqualified school principals.
- ➢ Ineffective Schoolteachers (No criterion for ineffectiveness was given)
- ➢ Class sizes are very large.
- ➢ Lack of parental involvement.

This study recommended that the Ministry of Education should consider privatizing public education (Kuwait Assembly, 2012), although no explicit reasons were given for this recommendation.

In another context, the Kuwaiti government requested a consultancy firm called Tony Blair Associates, which is run by the former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, to study the political and economic situation of the State of Kuwait (AlQabas, 2009, p.9). Its report, entitled 'A vision for Kuwait in 2030', was submitted to the Kuwaiti government in 2009. According to the report, the education system in Kuwait is currently unable to prepare the workforce to keep pace with the challenges of the future. The report called for the need to take

strong and effective measures, which if not taken will inevitably risk the future of Kuwait.

It also identified the Kuwaiti government as indifferent to the teaching profession, with insufficient attention given to keeping morale high in the profession. Teachers' professional development opportunities were also considered to be limited and initial teacher education was considered to be inadequate preparation for effective teaching in the 21st century.

The report suggested a range of educational reforms, notably the privatization of education (again no justification was given for this recommendation), paying more attention to teaching as a profession, and establishing a unified examination system, as well as giving families the freedom to choose which school is best for their children rather than being content with sending children to the nearest school from their residence (AlQabas, 2009, p.9).

Both the study by Kuwait Assembly (2012) and that by Tony Blair Associates (2009) confirmed that public education in Kuwait is encountering serious problems. These two studies, and the problems which they identified, provided the backdrop against which my doctoral research project was undertaken (see Chapter 3).

2.11 Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the Kuwaiti context in which my study took place. A brief description of the development of the State was presented. I have also provided an overview of the historical development of both public and private schools in Kuwait. In section 2.10 some of the challenges currently

facing the public Kuwaiti education system were presented. Discussing the Kuwaiti context was crucial prior to reviewing the existing literature on public versus private schooling and school effectiveness because these two domains of knowledge have largely arisen from research undertaken in Western countries. As presented in this chapter, Kuwait, to a large extent, is different from Western nations politically, economically, socially and culturally. In the next chapter, I present a review of previous studies which explored the academic attainment of public and private school students and literature on school effectiveness to explore what has been found in other contexts and cultures.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of two sections. The first section discusses the studies that have compared public and private school students in terms of their academic attainment. The second section reviews literature on school effectiveness.

As discussed in Chapter 1, in Kuwait, the commonly held view has been that private school students do better academically than public school students at university (Watfa & Motawaa, 2008). However, there has been no empirical research in Kuwait to verify this commonly held perception. Hence, the reason for reviewing public versus private school literature is that, and before comparing the academic attainment between the students of the said two systems, I needed to contextualize my piece of research. I also wanted to be informed about the methods and strategies that have been previously employed in comparing the academic attainment of publicly and privately educated students.

Based on the reasons outlined in Chapter 1, I believed that the explanation of the academic difference, if there is any, between the students of the said two systems would likely lie with the nature and quality of the secondary schools the students had attended. The private versus public school literature reviewed below also suggests that school level factors must play a part. Therefore, school effectiveness literature is reviewed in the second section in order to explore the school factors associated with students' academic attainment. These factors

were then used to define my research questions as discussed at the end of this chapter.

3.2 Section 1: Literature Review of Public versus Private Schools

This section has been divided into four sub-sections. The first sub-section reviews research that investigated the academic achievement of public and private school students at school level while the second sub-section discusses studies that looked at the longer-term impact of school type on university academic attainment. The rationale for this division is that the methods utilized in comparing the students' academic attainment of public and private schools at school level, to some extent, appeared to be different from those used in comparing them at university level. Despite the fact that the studies which compared public and private school students at university are more relevant to my own study, I chose to include also those which compared student attainment at school level because they make up the majority of studies in this field and they shed some useful insights. The third sub-section reviews some studies that proposed possible reasons for the academic superiority of private school students compared with public school students. Reviewing such studies was crucial since they could direct my attention to school effectiveness literature from which I could derive factors for comparing public and private schools. In the fourth sub-section, I discuss what I have learnt from reviewing the public versus private school literature such as whether it is necessary to control for the socioeconomic status of the students' parents in the Kuwaiti context and which strategy might be most appropriate for comparing the academic attainment of

the said two groups at university. Finally, based on this discussion, I articulate my main two research questions.

3.2.1 Studies of Academic Achievement in public and private schools

The studies of the academic attainment of public and private school students can be divided into two types: (1) studies that did not control for the socio-economic status of students' families and (2) those that took into account this factor when comparing the students' academic attainment of the said two systems. The structure of this sub-section respectively follows this division.

3.2.1.1 Academic Achievement in public and private schools: studies that did not control for the socio-economic status of students' families

In many developing countries, the intense competition between private and public schools has directed attention to the educational policies and funding of public schools (Riddell, 1993). Developing countries may have less established public education programmes and policies, but the question of whether private secondary school students academically perform higher than their counterparts from public ones has intrigued Riddell (1993). He conducted a review of existing data for nine developing countries; Brazil, Colombia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Dominican Republic, Kenya, Thailand and Philippines. The author concluded that the reported differences remain to be validated, and more research is required before making generalizations. In 1995 the World Bank carried out a comparative study of private and public schools in terms of achievement in five developing countries: Colombia, Dominican Republic, the Philippines, Tanzania, and Thailand. The study's question was "Which are better in terms of the pupils' achievement - public schools or private schools?

An instrument was developed and codified for the measurement of the achievement of secondary school pupils in these countries. It was administered to a random sample of 9076 pupils (361 schools). The study found that the level of students' academic achievement in private schools was higher than the achievement of public school students (Jimenez & Lockheed, 1995). Since the publication of The World Bank's (1995) report, many similar studies have been conducted in developing countries (Anand et al., 2009). Some of the most recent studies are discussed below.

Anand et al (2009) administered a study in Chile that utilized a large sample (83540 intermediate and secondary school students). Utilizing a standardized test called the SIMCE (math, science and language), which is administered annually through out Chile, the results of the study showed that students who went to either a private and/or tuition fee based school achieved higher scores in the achievement test than pupils in public schools. Similar results to those of Anand et al (2009) were reached in Thailand. Winai (2011) compared the academic attainment between twelfth grade public and private secondary school students in Thailand. She analyzed a database that consisted of information about 542 public and private schools. Analyzing the scores of standardized national examination; mathematics, science, English, Thai language, and social, the study revealed that private school students outperformed those from public schools.

In determining who perform higher academically, public or private secondary school students, Jimenez and Lockheed (1995), Anand et al (2009) and Winai (2011) used the parameters of standardized tests. Yet, some researchers

questioned the use of such a method in examining the students' academic attainment. For example, Kohan (2003) argued that standardized tests lack accuracy and, according to him, they only measure facts that are stored in short-term memory. Kohan (2003), therefore, suggested the use of other measures that allow pupils to exhibit their skills and abilities in a longer term. Also, the National Coalition of Education Activists (1999) opposed the use of standardized tests to measure the students' achievement, as according to them, these tests impose limitations on capturing an appropriate composition of knowledge.

Some researchers, on the other hand, employed a questionnaire survey as a method to compare the academic attainment of public and private school students. In Nigeria, Ehigiamusoe (2012) examined the differences in the academic attainment public and private secondary schools. The researcher used a random sample of 200 public and private secondary schools in the six Area Councils of the Federal Capital Territory (Student numbers were not mentioned). Data were collected using the questionnaire survey in which the students reported their grades in different subjects. The findings revealed that the academic performance of students in private secondary schools is higher than the academic performance of students in public secondary schools. In the same context, Sabitu et al, (2012) found contradicting results to those of Ehigiamusoe (2012). Sabitu et al, (2012) investigated the influence of school types on students' academic performance in Ondo State (Nigeria). Their study was designed to examine whether students' academic achievement was related to private and public secondary schooling. The researchers also used the questionnaire survey on a random sample that resulted in choosing 50

secondary schools in Ondo state (Student numbers were not mentioned). The participants were asked to report their grades in school. The study revealed no significant difference in academic achievement of students in the two types of secondary schools. Similar results to those of Sabitu et al, (2012) were found in Egypt, which has the same language and religion of Kuwait where my study was conducted, by Henadi (2004). The researcher aimed to identify whether differences in the academic attainment exist between public and private secondary school students. The sample of his study consisted of 360 secondary school students who were chosen using cluster random sampling. Utilizing a questionnaire survey, in which the participants were asked to state their scores in school, the study found that there were no statistically significant differences in academic attainment between the said two groups. However, the above-mentioned studies used a self-reporting questionnaire as a method of data collection while obtaining data about the students' school scores. The students may have had reasons not to report their actual scores in schools. Also, while neither Ehigiamusoe (2012) nor Sabitu et al, (2012) mentioned the sample size of their studies, that of Henadi (2004) is rather a small one for the purpose of determining whether public or private school students performed higher academically.

Only a very small number of studies, which compared public and private school students at school level, have found public school students to be academically higher-achievers than their counterparts from private schools. In Indonesia, for example, Newhouse and Beegle (2004) used the results of the national junior secondary school exams in order to compare the academic attainment of public and private junior secondary school - around 15 years old – of 4498 students. It

was found that students who attended public junior secondary schools performed higher in the national exams than comparable privately schooled peers. This means, although the majority of studies conducted in this field found private school students to have academically outperformed public school students, public school students might be found in some contexts to outperform academically private school students.

An important notice is that the studies discussed above, which did not control for the socioeconomic status of the students' parents, were carried out in developing countries. Since Kuwait is a developing country (see Chapter 2), this point is worth discussing at the end of this section. In the next sub-section I review some of the studies that did take into account the socioeconomic status of students' families in comparing the academic attainment of public and private school students to see whether they found different results from those that did not. Reviewing these studies might also be helpful in determining whether, or not, it is necessary to take this variable into consideration in the context of my study.

3.2.1.2 Studies of Academic Achievement in public and private schools: the impact of the socioeconomic status of the students' families.

Some researchers suggested that the consistent reports on the seemingly positive attainment of private school students should be interpreted with caution as a considerable amount of the related literature had attributed the academic superiority of private school students to their families' socioeconomic level and not to the school system (e.g. Willms, 1983; Cox & Jimenez, 1990). Accordingly, in this sub-section, I discuss some of the studies that took into consideration the

possible effect of the socioeconomic status of students' parents upon their children's academic attainment.

Willms (1983) administered a study in the USA to compare the academic attainment between public and private secondary school students. He used a nation-wide database that consisted of approximately 3,800,000 students. The data set included mathematics, science and reading test scores. After controlling for the students' family background (education, income and race), his analysis yielded that "there was no private schooling advantage, nationally, in reading, mathematics and science" (Willms, 1983, P. 128). In fact, he found that there was a small public school advantage in mathematics and science though private school students performed slightly better in reading.

Miller and Moore (1991) investigated the differences in the mathematics scores of eighth grade students (13-14 years old) from public and private schools in the United States. The sample of the study consisted of 6,788 randomly selected students. The results showed that mathematics achievement test scores were higher for private school students during both the pre- and post-tests. In order to test the fit of the data and results, the post-test scores were compared but when the father's occupation was controlled for, the difference in the scores became slightly smaller, but did not disappear.

In another context, a study by Cox and Jimenez (1990) was conducted to examine whether there were differences in pupils' achievement in Colombia and Tanzania. The researchers compared the mathematics and verbal aptitude test scores of public and private secondary school pupils (age range is not mentioned) in both countries (2028 pupils-186 schools). The results revealed

that private school pupils scored higher in the tests than the public school pupils. However, the researchers attributed this superiority to the quality of students and to the educational and socioeconomic level of families of those pupils, and not to private schools as such, as they state:

> *"Private school students have better family backgrounds than public school students. Fathers of private school students have incomes that are almost twice those of public school students. Parents of private school students have more education than those of public school students. A greater proportion of private school families lives in a large city and owns a car." (Cox & Jimenez, 1990, P. 9)*

Quite recently, in 2011, the OECD compared the academic attainment in reading of 15-year-old students in 26 OECD countries. Data were collected using the PISA reading standardized test. The results revealed that students who attend private schools tend to perform significantly better in the PISA reading assessments than students who attend public schools; but students in public schools in a similar socio-economic context as private schools tend to do equally well. In the USA, The Center on Education Policy (2007) carried out a longitudinal study entitled: "Are Private High Schools Better Academically Than Public High Schools?" This study utilized the nationally representative database of the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988-2000. In total, 13,626 students were surveyed for 8th, 10th, and 12th grades. This database also included the students' school scores in reading, mathematics, science and social studies. It was found that private secondary school students achieved academically higher than their counterparts from public secondary schools. It was also found that parents of private school students had higher parental involvement levels in comparison with parents of public school students. However, the differences in the academic attainment disappeared once the

parents' socioeconomic status of the students in the said two systems was controlled for. On the other hand, Milton and Friedman Foundation (MFF) (2007) also conducted another longitudinal study in the same context of that of The Center on Education Policy (2007). They carried out a longitudinal study (from 10th grade to 12th) to compare the academic attainment of public and private secondary school students in the USA using their results in mathematics. Private school students were found to have scored higher in mathematics than public school students. Unlike the study of the Center on Education Policy (2007), the differences between the students of public and private schools persisted even after controlling for the students' parents' socioeconomic status. Indeed, there are also studies that found that private school students outperform public school students even if the socioeconomic status of their families is controlled for.

In their study of American secondary schools, Coleman et al (1982) aimed to examine whether pupils' achievement is related to the type of school attended. They utilized a very large sample of 58,728 American secondary school pupils (over 1000 schools). After controlling for 17 family background variables, the pupils were surveyed using achievement tests. The results showed that private school pupils achieved 'considerably better' than public schools pupils (Coleman et al. 1982, p.73). In India, Kingdon (1996) conducted an empirical study to determine whether differences exist between public and private secondary schools in numeracy and literacy. Data were drawn from a purpose-designed stratified random sample survey of schools in urban Lucknow district. Data were collected form 928 students of class 8 (13 to 14 year olds) in 30 schools. The results revealed that private school students were academically higher-

achievers in comparison with public school students before and after controlling for the students' parents' socioeconomic status. Dronkers and Robert (2003) compared the academic attainment in reading and mathematics of 15-year-old students in 19 OECD countries. The purpose of their study was to investigate whether private school students outperform those from public schools. In their analysis, the researchers used the PISA 2000 dataset. Having controlled for the socioeconomic status of the students' parents, the analysis also indicated that private school students scored significantly higher than public school students in reading and mathematics.

In Kuwait, wherein my study was conducted, Alazemi (1999) examined the association between socio-economic status measures and secondary school students' academic attainment (12th grade-aged 17). Using a questionnaire survey, data was collected from a sample of 800 public school students. Interviews were carried out with 80 students and parents. Although the results suggested that parents' education and family size were, to some extent, associated with students' academic achievement, family income was found to have no relationship with students' academic attainment. I acknowledge that Alazemi (1999) only examined 'public' schools. However, and based on his review of economic and financial reports, he suggested that Kuwaiti people 'in general' enjoy very high standards of living.

> *"In addition to the basic income, there are several allowances given to the Kuwaiti citizen, including, for example, a marriage allowance of about KD 100 (220 GBP) and child benefit of KD 50 (110 GBP). Kuwaitis also enjoy indirect benefits, such as relatively free housing, free health services and a very low cost of services like electricity and the telephone. Most importantly, though, there are no taxes, and employment is guaranteed for all Kuwaiti citizens" (Alazemi, 1999, p. 46)*

Indeed, having reviewed the studies that compared the academic attainment of public and private school students at school level, I felt that the effect of the students' parents' socioeconomic status might be context related. This point will be discussed further later in this chapter. In the next section, I discuss studies that compared the academic attainment of public and private school students at university.

3.2.2 Academic attainment: university level

Like those administered at school level, some studies that compared the academic attainment of public and private school students at university also controlled for the socioeconomic status of students' parents while others did not. In addition, there were differences in terms of the stage at which the studies measured university students' academic attainment. In comparing the students' academic attainment of publicly and privately educated students at university level, some of these studies used the parameters of university entrance performance, freshers' GPA and the final GPA. This sub-section is presented according to the latter classification because the main reason for reviewing public versus private at university is to inform myself about the strategies that have been previously employed in comparing the academic attainment of publicly and privately educated students at university so that it can be decided which approach seems to be more promising and valid for the context of my own research inquiry.

Before reviewing this literature, one has to acknowledge that that university entrance performance (admission tests) is different from university academic attainment, but I chose to include the studies that used university entrance

performance as a method in this sub-section because university entrance performance or admission tests are conducted by higher education institutes. This means they should measure whether these students are prepared for university study.

Bodenhausen (1989) studied the extent to which there is a difference in university entrance performance of public school and private school students of the College Board in in Northern California. The sample was composed of 216 public and 24 private secondary schools. The results revealed that private school students slightly (not statistically significantly) outperformed public school students. Too, Paul et al., (2009), conducted a study in Minnesota State using database of 41 universities that included information about students' university entrance performance and school type. Their data suggested that private school students tend to do academically better in university entrance performance than public school students. In Australia, Marks et al., (2001) examined university entrance performance of public and private secondary school students. This was accomplished by using data from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) project (13,613 students). The researchers controlled for the socioeconomic status of the students. The findings showed that students attending private schools achieved higher in their university entrance performance compared to students at public schools. However, in their study of the database of Monash University in Australia, Dobson and Skuja (2005) concluded that high scores in university entrance performance are not a good predictor of university success. This might be the reason why some researchers went beyond the university entrance performance and compared the academic attainment of public and private school students using their academic attainment

when they have finished their first academic year at university. Some of these studies are discussed below.

A study of particular relevance to my own was conducted in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by Almqoci (2000). This study is important to my own because the political, economical and social structure of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to some extent, resembles Kuwait. Almqoci's (2000) study, entitled "private and public education in the scale of academic achievement at University", was designed to identify differences between students who have finished public secondary schools with students who finished private secondary school, in terms of the level of achievement in mathematics at King Saud University in Riyadh. The results of this study, which were applied to 294 freshers, showed that no statistical differences between the said two groups. Almqoci believed his findings could be generalized to include all subject disciplines and to other Saudi Universities (Almqoci, 2000). Similar results to those of Almqoci (2000) were found by Blackstone (1994) in the USA. The researcher administered a study of a database that consisted of information about 14, 242 university students in order to examine whether there were significant differences between the GPA scores of public and private school students in their first year of university. The results of his study revealed that there were no significant differences between public and private school students in their first-year university GPA.

In Italy, using a dataset comprising the 1995 cohort of students (n= 18,843), Cappellari (2004) studied the relationship between the type of secondary school attended (private versus public) and the academic attainment of university

freshers. His analysis showed that public secondary school students were academically outperformers in their first academic year at university in comparison with those who finished private ones. In general, he concluded; students who finished private secondary schools appeared to be associated with lower university academic performance. Similarly, Win and Miller (2005) aimed to determine the factors that impact university students' academic attainment in University of Australia. Using the first-year average scores of the students, they also found that public school students perform academically higher than private school students. However, they attributed this unexpected result to a statistical problem as the scores of students from private schools had been artificially inflated. Birch and Miller (2005) also conducted a study in Australia, entitled "The Determinants of Students' Tertiary Academic Success". The researchers examined several factors which they believed to affect university academic attainment in their first year at university, one of which was school type (private and public schools). They utilized a dataset of 1452 students from the University of Western Australia. The results suggested that students from public schools have higher first-year university results than students from private schools. The same researchers carried out a further study in 2006 using a larger sample (n= 6864). But this time, the main focus of their study was on the influence of type of secondary school attended upon university academic attainment. In this research, Birch and Miller (2006) confirmed that school type had an impact upon the marks of first-year university students and found that private school students had lower marks in their first year at university than public school students. This means, and unlike the mainstream of the relevant literature, there have been studies in some contexts (e.g. Italy

and Australia) showing that public schools students do academically higher than private school students.

It seems that studying the students' academic attainment at university using their performance as a whole in a given academic year (e.g. first year) is more reliable than being content with using the parameters of the university entrance performance, because this technique allows students to exhibit their academic performance for a longer term (Kohan, 2003). Indeed, this might be why some researchers considered the students' academic attainment even for a longer term such as the students' final GPA.

Sutton and Galloway (2000) focused on the university students' final GPA of a sample of university graduates from 26 private and 17 public secondary schools in the United States. It was found that there was no significant difference in the final GPA of the public and private school students. Too, Horowitz and Spector (2005) investigated a database that included the final GPA of 15270 American university students. Unlike the results of Sutton and Galloway (2000), Horowitz and Spector's study (2005) revealed that students who had finished private schools did academically higher than students from public schools.

Type of school attended and its impact on students' academic attainment at the end of their university degree has also been the focus of interest for some researchers in the UK. Like many of their counterparts in the USA, some British researchers considered the final performance of the university students. McNabb et al., (2002) utilized a data set (74000 university graduates) to examine whether there were statistical significant differences between public and private school students in the academic attainment in 15 subject areas at

different universities in England and Wales. They found that students who came to university from private schools performed worse, on average, than those who attended public schools. Likewise, Smith and Naylor (2005) analyzed a dataset that contained information about 63250 university students in the UK (a full cohort of UK university students). They examined the determinants of final degree classification for the students in different subjects, one of which was school type; private and public secondary schools. They found that university graduates who attended public schools performed academically higher than those who attended private ones, as measured by their final grades at university. However, other UK studies have found conflicting evidence. For example, Hoare and Johnston (2011) utilized a data set of 4305 graduates from Bristol University. The researchers explored university performance of the students using their grades at graduation. The analysis indicated that students from private schools gained higher grades than those from public schools. Different results were also reached at Cambridge University by Parks (2011). Parks (2011) analyzed a data set of all Cambridge University graduates from 2005 to 2010 (18252 graduates). The analysis showed that there was no difference in the degree performance of undergraduates from the public and private secondary schools.

It is noticeable that the results of the studies that compared the academic attainment of public and private school students in their first year at university or in their academic performance at the end of their university degree are in general different from those conducted at school level and the ones which compared them in university entrance performance. Indeed, while private school students appeared to academically outperform their counterparts from public

schools when compared at school level or in university entrance performance, public school students were found to academically outperform their counterparts from private schools at university in a considerable number of studies. It is difficult, however, to determine why these studies reported conflicting results. Nonetheless, these studies suggest that the differences in the academic attainment of public and private school students is still a controversial issue, at university level at least.

Finally, it has to be mentioned that, like some of those conducted at school level, some of the studies that compared the academic attainment of public and private school students at university level attributed the differences to the socioeconomic status of students' parents. For example, a study was conducted in USA using database of 41 universities (167,816 students) that included information about university students' entrance performance and socioeconomic status. The study found that socioeconomic status is indeed associated with test scores (Sackett et al., 2009). On the other hand, many studies suggested weak or no relationships between students' socioeconomic status and their academic attainment at university. For instance, in the USA – in the same context of the previous mentioned study - Paul et al., (2009), administered a meta-analysis study entitled "Does Socioeconomic Status Explain the Relationship Between Admissions Tests and Post-Secondary Academic Performance?" The researchers found that the students' academic attainment at university was not a function of their families' socioeconomic status. This will be discussed in sub-section 3.3.4

Most studies in this field have been quantitative in nature and therefore lacked the ability to explain why private school students, in general, tend to outperform academically public school students. Some studies, which proposed possible reasons for the academic superiority of private school students at university, are discussed in the next sub-section.

3.2.3 Reasons for the superiority in the academic attainment of private school students

In the USA, Evans and Schwab (1995) analysed a database (High School and Beyond) that contained information of students from 1100 secondary schools. After controlling for the students' ethnicity, the results revealed that finishing private secondary schools raises the probability of entering University – by 13%- in comparison with those who finished public secondary schools. In explaining such results, and according to Blackstone (1994, p.29) "private schools offer a college preparatory programme to children they select and whose parents select them" Likewise, Jackson (1981) asked and answered the following question:

> *"Why does it seem natural that students at schools like St. Paul's [private schools] would study math and science and history rather than, distributive education or home-making or applied marketing skills? Obviously, because they need such studies to get into college. St. Paul's school and others like it are pre schools; their chief function is to prepare students for college."* (Cited in Blackstone, 1994, p.124)

In a study entitled "Factors Affecting Academic Performance of Undergraduate Students at Uganda Christian University", Martha (2009) compared the academic attainment of public and private secondary school students at university. She administered a questionnaire survey to a random sample of 354

students who were studying in different faculties (colleges). The findings of the study suggested that private schools prepared their students for university more effectively than public schools. However, Martha's (2009) study, which was purely quantitative, did not explain how private school students were prepared for university more effectively than public school students. In fact, she based her latter conclusion by using the students' grades only, which were reported by the students themselves.

Paton (2013) published an article in *The Daily Telegraph* entitled "School league tables: privately educated pupils 'better' prepared for top universities". Paton (2013) states that, "private school pupils [have a] grip on places at leading universities such as Oxford, Cambridge and University College London which demand a string of top grades as a basic entry requirement" (Paton, *The Daily Telegraph*, 2013). Like Martha (2009), Paton (2013) also did not explain how private school students were better prepared for university than public school students.

Other studies suggested that private school students academically outperform those from public schools because, according to them, private schools are more effective than public ones. Some of these studies are discussed below.

Attributing the academic superiority of private school students in comparison with public school students to some effective practices within private schools is not a new issue. Indeed, as early as 1982, Coleman et al (1982) published their study of American secondary schools (over 1000 schools) in which they found private school students to academically achieve higher than public school students (see sub-section 3.2.1.2 for further discussion of this research). The

researchers attributed the academic superiority of private schools to a range of factors: monitoring of individual pupil's progress, an emphasis on homework, the disciplinary climate and attendance policies

There are also some quite recent studies that attributed the academic superiority of private school students to the view that private school are more effective than public schools. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) conducted a large-scale study in 2000 entitled "School Factors Related to Quality and Equity". Hundreds of public and private schools in 36 countries participated in this study. This study, which found private school students to academically outperform public school students, uncovered the following important results:

➢ Private schools are more effective than public schools in the extent to which they involve their teachers in the process of decision-making.

➢ Unlike public schools, private schools are autonomous in relation to choosing which textbooks, appointing teachers and dismissing teachers, and establishing teachers' starting salaries

Dronkers and Robert (2003) compared the academic attainment in reading and mathematics of 15-year-old students in 19 OECD countries. The purpose of their study was to investigate whether private schools were more effective than public schools. In their analysis, the researchers used the PISA 2000 dataset. Having controlled for the socioeconomic status of the students' parents, the analysis indicated that private school students scored significantly higher than public school students in reading and mathematics. The researchers concluded that private school students were found to be academically higher achievers

because they attended more effective schools (no criteria for effectiveness were given) in comparison with their counterparts from public schools.

In Pakistan, Muhammad (2008) conducted a large-scale study to compare the quality of secondary education (15-18 years old) in public and private schools in Punjab district. Two hundred and sixteen secondary schools were randomly selected (108 Public and 108 private schools). In addition to the students' scores in school, questionnaires for principals, teachers and students were used as the research instruments of his study. The results indicated that private school students are academically upper achievers than public school students. In explaining the results of his study, Muhammad (2008) concluded:

> *"Heads [principals] of private sector secondary schools were better than heads of public sector secondary schools regarding involvement of subordinate staff in decision making, keeping themselves as a part of team while leading them and carrying out the well- organized tasks." (P.151)*

In this sub-section, I reviewed some studies, which attempted to explain why it is the case that private school students tend to outperform public school students academically. The methodologies employed in these studies were, however, all quantitative, and therefore could only provide a relatively superficial understanding of the characteristics of effective public and private schools. Nonetheless, they did provide some useful insights that one may take into consideration when investigating such a complex phenomenon. This will be disused in the next sub-section.

3.2.4 Discussion and Conclusion

In comparing the students' achievement of public and private school students at school and university level, few studies came up with no differences at all

between the two systems (Willms, 1983; Blackstone, 1994; Almqoci, 2000; Henadi, 2004; Parks, 2011; Sabitu et al, 2012). Almost the majority of studies in this field reported that there is a difference in the university academic attainment of students from private and public secondary schools both at school and at university. At school level, most of the studies reported private secondary school students to academically achieve higher than public secondary school students (e.g. Coleman et al., 1982; Miller & Moore, 1991; Jimenez & Lockheed, 1995; Dronkers & Robert, 2003; Milton & Friedman Foundation, 2007; Muhammad, 2008; Sackett et al., 2009; Anand et al., 2009; Winai, 2011; Ehigiamusoe, 2012). Nonetheless, the number of the studies which found private schools to outperform public school students academically appeared to decrease when the comparison is made at university level. In fact, some studies carried out in Italy and Australia identified that public school students performed better academically than private school students at university (Cappellari, 2004; Win & Miller, 2005; Birch & Miller, 2006). The lesson which can be learnt from these studies is that the differences between public and private schools is still a controversial issue, at university level at least and context may well be an influential factor. My study will contribute to knowledge in terms of whether private school students academically outperform public school students at university in the Kuwaiti context. Yet, the question to be addressed now is how this can be determined.

Some studies conducted at school level used the self-reporting questionnaire in comparing the students' academic attainment of the said two systems. As stated earlier in this chapter, obtaining data about the students' school scores using a self-reporting method is indeed questionable. The students may have reasons

not to report their actual scores in schools. Other studies used the parameters of standardized tests; more repeatedly mathematics and language standardized tests. According to Daniel (2006), the use of standardized tests has a serious limitation as he stated:

> *"[Students' academic] achievement has usually been measured using a standardized basic skills test. This type of test obviously has limitations. Basic skills are by no means the be-all-and-end-all of educational achievement. Disadvantages lie in a possible mismatch between what students have learnt in class and what is measured by the test, and in the lack of flexibility of these tests (P.55)"*

In comparing the students' academic attainment between publicly and privately educated students at university level, some of the studies used the parameters of university entrance performance, freshers' GPA and the final GPA. The final GPA in particular appeared to provide a comparatively more comprehensive picture on the students' academic attainment as it exhibits their knowledge and skills in a far longer term (e.g. in Kuwait, more than 4 years) (The National Coalition of Education Activist, 1999; Kohan, 2003). However, using the final GPA might be somewhat problematic in that one cannot be sure about the pure effect of the schooling systems upon their students' academic attainment. Logically, and since the academic attainment of these students is measured at the end of their university degree, there must be a university effect upon their academic attainment.

Nevertheless, the final GPA, among the other parameters, might be the best available for the context of my own study. As stated in Chapter 1, in Kuwait, the commonly held view has been that private school students do better academically than public school students at Kuwait University (Watfa & Motawaa, 2008). It therefore seems appropriate to choose the end achievement

(final GPA) of university students in order to explore whether this view is supported by evidence.

In conclusion, the students' final GPA will be utilized in addressing whether there are differences in the academic attainment between public and private school at Kuwait University. Accordingly, the first research question of my study was:

"Is there a statistically significant difference in the academic attainment of publicly and privately educated students at the University of Kuwait in terms of their GPA at the end of their degree programme?"

As will be discussed in Chapter 4, the analysis of Kuwait University's dataset provided evidence of statistical differences between privately and publicly educated students, in terms of their final GPA, in favour of private school students. However, as with many of the studies discussed so far in this chapter, the statistical investigation I had conducted could not explain the reasons for the statistical differences in the academic attainment between the students of the said two systems. I, therefore, identified a further research question, which provided the focus for the main body (Part 2- see Chapter 6 & 7) of my study:

"Why do privately educated students academically outperform publicly educated students at Kuwait University in terms of their GPA at the end of their degree programme?"

Some of the related literature suggested the socioeconomic status of the private school students' families as a factor to which this academic superiority is attributed and not to the schooling system itself (e.g. Cox & Jimenez, 1990;

Miller & Moore, 1991; Sackett et al., 2009). On the other hand, there is also a considerable amount of research that suggested that private school students academically outperform their counterparts from public schools even if the socioeconomic status of parents of these students was controlled for (Coleman et al 1982; Kingdon, 1996; Marks et al., 2001; Dronkers & Robert, 2003; Milton & Friedman Foundation, 2007; Paul et al., 2009). This suggests that controlling for the students' parents' socioeconomic status might be necessary in some contexts whereas it might not be in others. As discussed in Chapter 1, attributing the superiority of private school students to the socioeconomic level of these students' families is not likely to be found in the state of Kuwait. Unlike most of the countries wherein the studies controlled for the students' home background, Kuwait is a very small country with a very small and homogenous population (see Chapter 2). People in Kuwait have the same language and religion and come from the same ethnicity. Furthermore, Kuwait does not have a social class system (Alazemi, 1999). Economically, and unlike most developing countries, Kuwait is considered as a very rich country (see Chapter 2). This is the reason why I believe that the explanation of the academic superiority of private school students at university would likely lie with the nature and quality of the secondary schools these students had attended.

In this regard, some of the studies that compared the academic attainment of the students of the said two systems 'at university' level suggested that private school students outperformed public school students because private schools 'prepared their students for university' better than public ones (e.g. Jackson, 1981; Murnane, 1981; Bodenhausen, 1989; Martha, 2009; Paton, 2013). However, it has to be stated that none of these studies, which suggested that

private schools prepared their students for university better than public schools, explained how private schools did so. More importantly, none of these studies defined what they meant by 'preparation for university'. Since the purpose of my study is to compare the academic attainment of public and private school students 'at university level', investigating the extent to which the said two systems 'prepared their students for university' can be said to be a worthwhile factor (this will be discussed at the end of this chapter). Other studies suggested that private school students outperform their counterparts from public schools because private schools are more effective in some of their processes than public schools (e.g. Coleman et al., 1982; OECD, 2000; Dronkers & Robert, 2003; Milton & Friedman Foundation 2007; Muhammad, 2008). These studies, however, were all quantitative and this might have made it difficult to determine why private school students academically outperformed public school students. Also, these studies did not explain what they meant by 'school effectiveness'. Nonetheless, these studies were very helpful to me because they directed my sight to the literature of school effectiveness. Indeed, the review of the school effectiveness literature enabled me to identify key school level factors to explore why private school students academically outperformed those from public schools in Kuwait University as measured by the students' final GPA – a finding of this study discussed in detail in Chapter 4. This is discussed in the next section.

3.3 Section 2: School Effectiveness Literature Review

As stated in the previous section, I conducted an analysis of Kuwait University's dataset to determine whether the findings of the mainstream of the relevant literature are replicable in Kuwait. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, this analysis provided evidence of statistical differences between privately and publicly educated students, in terms of their final GPA, in favour of private school students. In the light of this result I wanted to know why privately educated students academically outperformed publicly educated students at Kuwait University in terms of their GPA at the end of their degree programme.

Some of the literature of public versus private school, which indicated that private school students academically achieve higher than public school students, attributed this result to the notion that private schools are more effective than public ones (e.g. Coleman et al., 1982; Dronkers & Robert, 2003; Milton & Friedman Foundation, 2007; Muhammad, 2008). Accordingly, I reviewed school effectiveness literature.

The review of the school effectiveness literature enabled me to identify key school level factors to explore why private school students academically outperformed those from public schools at Kuwait University as measured by the students' final GPA. This body of literature also provided useful insights in relation to designing my research methodology and defining my research sub-questions.

This section has been divided into eight sub-sections. It begins with a consideration of definitions of school effectiveness. In the second sub-section I discuss the historical growth of school effectiveness research. Characteristics of

effective schools are introduced in the third sub-section. I then present a critique of the characteristics of school effectiveness. Based on this critique, I choose and justify my choice of three school effectiveness characteristics. These three characteristics are school leadership, teacher effectiveness and parental involvement. Respectively, from the fifth sub-section to the seventh, I engage with literature on the leadership effectiveness, teacher effectiveness and parental involvement. In the ninth sub-section, I present a summary of the literature reviewed based on which I introduce 5 research sub-questions. I also discuss the methodologies employed in the relevant literature and conclude that using a mixed-method methodology in addressing my research questions is worthwhile.

3.3.1 Definition of School Effectiveness

There is a lack of consensus as to what constitutes "effectiveness." Some scholars looked at it from the "inputs-outputs" dimension while others prefer to choose the systematic approach "inputs-processes-outputs". Others, however, seem to consider the "inputs-processes-outputs" approach and espouse it with the "context" dimension. Recently, scholars appeared to adopt "inputs-processes-outputs-context" approach and linked it with school improvements (Teddlie, Reynolds, 2000). Reynolds et al. (1994, p.93) stated that the lack of a common operational definition of an effective school might cause problems in comparing results across a variety of studies. Having reviewed the literature, it appears that the number of school effectiveness definitions may equal the number of the studies conducted in this field. Some of these definitions are discussed below.

Edmonds (1979, p. 16) defined school effectiveness as the ability of the school to "bring the children of the poor to those minimal masteries of basic school skills that now describe minimally successful pupil performance for children of the middle class." This definition is too specific to be relevant to the context of my own study, as there is not a similar class system in Kuwait.

Cuttance (1985) views a school as effective if its pupils achieve 'a higher than average level when compared to an average school (cited in Reynolds & Reid 1985, p.5). For me, the strength of this definition lies in the notion of "comparison". The effectiveness of schools cannot be well understood unless comparisons between the schools themselves are taken into consideration. However, Cuttance's definition does not illustrate what constitutes 'average' performance.

Mortimore (1991) considers a school to be as effective, only if it promotes progress for all its pupils beyond what would be expected, based on their prior attainment. Mortimore's definition (1991) is considered by many researchers to be one of the most appropriate definitions for school effectiveness.

In his paper presented at the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement, Ninan (2006) argues that a school is effective when school processes result in observable positive outcomes (i.e. cognitive, attitude and behavior) among its pupils over a period of time. It is clear that this definition places an emphasis on the period of time in which the positive outcomes have been observed. This definition chimes with my own beliefs and is consistent with the approach I have adopted in my study as it utilized the out comes from university students.

Operationally, in this study, it is my basic assumption that more effective schools (processes) produces academically better performers (outcomes). Since private school students were found to academically outperform public school students in their final GPA at Kuwait University, the latter assumption will be examined by studying (some of) the "processes" of both schooling systems in the Kuwaiti "context", to see whether, or not, the "processes" of private schools are more effective than those of public ones.

3.3.2 The Historical Growth of School Effectiveness Research

Tracing the historical growth of school effectiveness literature might provide better understanding of the current state of this field. Reviewing school effectiveness history is also important because it reflects how the various phases of school effectiveness literature are internationally linked (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). In general, the growth of school effectiveness research can be divided into three waves (Riddell, 1988, p.49; De Maeyer et al., 2007). Each wave has its unique characteristics; the concern of the first wave was investigating the differences in pupils' achievement across different schools. The second wave emerged from the criticism made of the first wave and can be regarded as an attempt to amend the methodological malfunctions of the first wave (Riddell, 1988). These two waves were succeeded by a third wave, which is characterized by the use of multilevel research designs and the emergence of other national and international studies (De Maeyer et al., 2007, Reynolds, 2010).

The First Wave: Research into the determinants of academic achievement

The beginning of the school effectiveness movement started in the 1960s when Coleman published his report in the United States, called "Equality of Educational Opportunity" (Coleman et al., 1966). Coleman was particularly interested in determining the educational opportunities that were available to different ethnic groups. In order to do so, data were collected from more than 4,000 schools and the findings of standardized tests of students' achievement showed that school differences accounted only for 5-9% of the differences in students' achievement. This means that school level factors were, to a large extent, not important in comparison to other factors, which are responsible for 91-95% of the differences, and the factor of family background (ethnicity) seemed to be the most important. Six years later, similar results were reached in the USA by Jencks with his colleagues (Jencks, et al., 1972). Jenks and his colleagues believed that "school does not matter" and "what does matter," they argued, is the family background of these pupils.

On the other side of the Atlantic, British researchers were conducting studies similar to those conducted in the United States, but different in terms of the discrimination factor, which was on the basis of the socioeconomic status. Like their Americans counterparts, the British researchers came up with the notion that "schooling does not matter" and what does matter, they argued, is the pupils' socioeconomic background (Douglas, 1964; Davie, et al., 1972).

Further research was conducted in the 1970s to determine whether these studies' findings were generalisable. Edmonds (1979), for example, administered several studies in the USA, the main question of which was "Does

school matter?" He refuted the findings of studies that undervalued school effects and suggested that schools have a considerable effect on students' attainment.

The Second Wave: Research into the determinants of school effectiveness

Purkey & Smith (1983) claimed there were five major problems with studies undertaken in the 'first wave': (1) they lacked representative samples, (2) they made inappropriate comparisons, (3) there were errors in identifying effective schools, (4) achievement data was collected at school level, and (5) subjective criteria were used in determining school success. Cronbach (1976) commented on the results of the said studies as follows:

> *"The majority of studies of educational effects, whether classroom experiments, or evaluations of programs or surveys have collected and analyzed data in ways that conceal more than they reveal. The established methods have generated false conclusions in many studies." (Cronbach, 1976, P. 1)*

In the 1980s, new statistical techniques were developed and were helpful in overcoming some defects of the research conducted in the first wave. Indeed, "during this period was the development of multilevel mathematical models to more accurately assess the effects of all the units of analysis associated with schooling" (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000, p.12). Moreover, according to Verdis (2002), unlike the researchers of the first wave who depended primarily on using quantitative methods, some researchers in the 1980s started to consider some qualitative methods for collecting data.

One of the most important studies conducted during the second wave was Mortimore's study, located in the United Kingdom (Mortimore et al., 1988). The aim of the study was to investigate whether some schools were more effective

than others in terms of pupils' learning and development. Race, gender, and family background were controlled for using a variety of different statistical techniques. Over a period of four years, 2,000 pupils in fifty randomly selected primary schools in London were examined. The results showed that some schools were more effective at the level of both the classroom and the schools themselves. Mortimore attributed the effectiveness of the said schools to specific characteristics, which will be discussed latter in this chapter. The list of characteristics identified by Mortimore is considered by many researchers to be one of the most complete. However, Mortimore and his colleagues themselves acknowledged that their list should be used as a framework, rather than a blueprint.

The intellectual traditions of the second wave are not very different from those of the third wave (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000, p.15), notably in the areas of (1) stability over time of school effect, (2) school effects on different outcomes and (3) the existence of size of school effects. However, the third wave is different from the second in two important aspects. This is discussed below.

The Third Wave: The emergence of other national studies

Before the 1990s, most school effectiveness research was conducted in the USA and the UK. Since that time, school effectiveness research has been expanding its base in many other countries, such as the Netherlands, Canada, Australia, Taiwan, Hong Kong and France. Moreover, international organizations, such as the World Bank have started to fund this kind of research so that developing and developed countries can improve their schooling systems.

Another noticeable aspect of this wave is the attempt to identify the key features of effective schools. According to Reynolds (1998), there has emerged a voluminous international literature about the characteristics of effective schools.

As a Kuwaiti researcher, I am interested in knowing whether a list produced in, say the USA, could be useful in the Kuwaiti context, given that Kuwaiti people are culturally different from the Americans in many ways. For instance, unlike the USA, there are no minority ethnic groups in Kuwait. In Britain, as another example, most school effectiveness research takes into consideration the socioeconomic background of the students' families, whereas in Kuwait people do not have social class system (Alazemi, 1999). Nevertheless, before considering the appropriateness of using lists produced in other contexts, some of the most famous lists will be discussed in the following subsection.

3.3.3 Characteristics of Effective Schools

In this sub-section, I present some lists of school effectiveness characteristics to explore whether there are common features across the different lists.

Edmonds (1979) was the first researcher to establish a list of characteristics of effective schools. In his study of effective elementary schools in the United States, Edmonds listed the five following characteristics:

1) Effective leadership.

2) High expectations of student achievement.

3) Teachers' behavior that conveys the high expectations that all pupils can obtain the basic skills.

4) An orderly and safe climate conducive to teaching and learning.

5) The use of measures of pupils' achievement.

Ever since Edmonds published these characteristics, researchers have been examining and revising his list. However, the central elements of Edmonds' list seem to remain the same.

At the same time, but in the UK, a well-known longitudinal study was conducted by Rutter et al. (1979) into 12 secondary schools in London. Their study revealed that an effective school should have:

1) A combination of firm leadership and teacher involvement.

2) Academic emphasis, involving use of homework, setting clear goals and having high expectations.

3) Effective classroom management.

4) Good models of behaviour provided by teachers.

5) Sound school environment, with good working conditions.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Mortimore et al. (1988) also undertook a study in Inner London. He and his team collected data from fifty randomly selected London elementary schools, involving 2,000 pupils. Their study identified the following characteristics of effective schools:

1) Effective leadership.

2) Effective teaching.

3) Good communication between teachers and pupils.

4) Effective record keeping.

5) Parental involvement.

This set of characteristics is quite similar to those put forward by Edmonds and Rutter, in spite of the ten-year gap between them. They all emphasized the role

of principals and teachers in creating effective schools. However, Mortimore et al. adds an additional dimension, "parental involvement". They identified the importance of two-way communication. Teachers are to report and discuss the pupils' progress with parents, and parents should assist and support teachers. Mortimore also identified the importance of "effective record keeping, not an aspect highlighted by Edmonds (1979) or Rutter et al., (1979).

Two of the most famous lists of characteristics of effective schools were generated by Levine and Lezotte (1990) and Sammons et al., (1995) (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). Teddlie and Reynolds (2000, P.144) distillated these two lists of characteristics as follows:

1) The process of effective leadership

   ➢ Being firm and purposeful.
   ➢ Involving others in the process.
   ➢ Exhibiting instructional leadership.
   ➢ Frequent, personal monitoring.
   ➢ Selecting and replacing staff.

2) The processes of effective teaching

   ➢ Maximizing class time.
   ➢ Successful grouping and organization.
   ➢ Exhibiting best teaching practices.
   ➢ Adapting practice to particulars of classroom.

3) Developing and maintaining a pervasive focus on learning

   ➢ Focusing on academics.
   ➢ Maximizing school learning time.

4) Producing a positive school culture

   ➢ Creating a shred vision.
   ➢ Creating an orderly environment
   ➢ Emphasizing positive reinforcement.

5) Creating high and appropriate expectations for all

> - For students.
> - For staff.

6) Emphasizing student responsibilities and rights

> - Responsibilities.
> - Rights.

7) Monitoring progress at all levels

> - At the school level.
> - At the classroom level.
> - At the student level.

8) Developing staff skills at school site

> - Site based.
> - Integrated with ongoing professional development.

9) Involving parents in productive and appropriate ways

> - Buffering negative influences.
> - Encouraging productive interactions with parents.

Based on a review of the relevant literature the Office of Public Instruction in the USA established "Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools" (Bergeson, 2002). These nine characteristics are:

1) Effective leadership.

2) A clear and shared vision.

3) High standards and expectations of learning and teaching.

4) High levels of collaboration and communication.

5) Curriculum, instruction and assessments aligned with state standards.

6) Frequent monitoring of learning and teaching.

7) Focused professional development.

8) A supportive learning environment.

9) High levels of parent and community involvement.

It is noticeable that there are common characteristics among the above-mentioned lists of characteristics. All of these lists included references to effective leadership and effective teaching as characteristics of effective schools. Most of these lists also came up with having high expectations of student achievement (Edmonds, 1979; Rutter et al. 1979; Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000; Bergeson, 2002), creating positive climate in class (Edmonds, 1979; Rutter et al. 1979; Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000; Bergeson, 2002) and having high levels of parental involvement (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000; Mortimore et al. 1988; Bergeson, 2002), as characteristics of effective schools. Yet, the question is what characteristics would be appropriate to investigate in the context of my study. This is discussed in the next sub-section.

3.3.4 Critique of the Characteristics of SE: Kuwaiti Context

In the context of my own study, it is important to acknowledge that lists of the characteristics of school effectiveness have mainly been generated as results of studies in the West. Thus, importing a whole Western list of characteristics into the Kuwaiti context may be unhelpful. Reynolds (1998, p.20) states that: "We also need more on the extent to which school factors are universal and apply across all context in a country or may be context specific." Although there are some Eastern countries (i.e. India and Malaysia) in which some lists of school characteristics have been established, these countries still differ from Kuwait in terms of culture. Benn and Chitty (1996, p.56) argued: "effectiveness researchers mostly inhabit a homogenized, sanitized world, which ignores social and cultural differences".

To date, no research has been conducted in Kuwait to produce such a list that this research could make use of. However, "some school effectiveness variables [characteristics] seem to be able to 'travel' across levels of context, while others do not" (Reynolds, 2010, p.329). On this basis, I will discuss the extent to which it seems appropriate for me to use some of the characteristics set out in the above-mentioned lists.

As I listed in the last sub-section, there were five characteristics that were common in most of the lists of school effectiveness. They are stated as follows:

1) Effective leadership.

2) Effective teaching.

3) High expectations of student achievement.

4) Creating positive climate in class

5) Parental involvement.

As an individual researcher with limited time and resources, I had to be selective when identifying which elements of the lists of characteristics of effective schools I would explore in my study. Choosing too many characteristics to investigate carried the danger of sacrificing the depth for the width.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the Kuwait Assembly conducted a study, with technical support from the World Bank, entitled "Problems of Public Education in Kuwait" (Kuwait Assembly, 2012). This study revealed that the public education system in Kuwait is suffering from several problems, including (1) weak and unqualified school principals, (2) ineffective teachers (no explicit criterion for ineffectiveness was stated) and (3) a lack of parental involvement (see Chapter 2 for further detail on this study). Without a justification, this study recommended

that the Ministry of Education should consider privatizing public education (Kuwait Assembly, 2012). Hence, It was against this backdrop that my study derived the following three characteristics from literature of school effectiveness; (1) leadership effectiveness, (2) teacher effectiveness and (3) parental involvement.

Thus, and in addition to the extent to which public and private school prepared their students for university (see Section 1), this study will be examining three characteristics when comparing public and private schooling in Kuwait; leadership effectiveness, teacher effectiveness and parental involvement.

Consequently, in the next three sub-sections I respectively discuss the relevant literature of effective leadership, effective teachers and parental involvement. Under each of the following three sub-sections, the studies are organized and discussed according to common themes.

3.3.5 Effective School Leadership

Although the terminology of leadership is different from that of management, they are often used as synonyms in school effectiveness research. The reason of this confusion might be that the distinctive line between the two terminologies is unclear. However, leadership is often related to values or purpose while management relates to implementation or technical issues and this means that management is merely a function of leadership (Bush et al., 1998). Indeed, leadership is far more comprehensive than management. While leaders are concerned with the process of developing mutual purposes, managers are directed towards coordinating activities in order to get a job done. Leaders and 'followers' work together to create real change, whereas managers and

'subordinates' join forces to sell services (Rost, 1991, pp. 149-152, cited in Northouse, 2013 p.13). Although differentiation between leadership and management is beyond the concern of this study, I will be using these two terminologies in the way in which they are normally used in the literature on school effectiveness.

In the next two sub-sections I review literature on (a) principals' core functions, responsibilities and values and (b) principals leadership styles and discuss the extent to which these are relevant factors to which private school students' superiority at Kuwait University might be attributed.

3.3.5.1 Principals' functions, responsibilities and values

According to Cranston and Ehrich (2009), the functions and responsibilities of principals in most countries across the world have become more complex and challenging in recent years. The international Confederation of Principals examined principals' work in many different countries. They concluded that effective principals' roles and functions include (Renihan & Phillips, 2003, p.16):

1) Accepting the fundamental responsibility for the quality of the learning, which forms the educational foundation for all young people in their community.

2) Developing, nurture and maintain excellent relationships with the students, staff, parent community and other providers within the wider school context.

3) Being accountable for the quality and effectiveness of the teaching and learning programmes in the school.

4) Creating and maintaining a learning environment, that values the academic, vocational, spiritual and broad development needs of their students, and to integrate these characteristics in a holistic way.

5) Maintaining a positively oriented and physically safe learning environment, which encourages and values the contribution of all people who work, teach and learn within it.

6) Being a role model for the profession of school leadership.

7) Using effective processes to establish strategic directions and set realistic goals for their organizations.

In England, Day et al., (2011) conducted an empirical study to address the following research question; what do all successful leaders do in most contexts? They carried out a statistical analysis of national data sets on students' academic attainment to sample the schools where students' were of high academic achievement. Their analysis yielded a sample of 20 elementary and 20 secondary schools into which case studies were conducted. The findings of their study suggested four categories of successful leadership practices (Day et al., 2011, p. 109- 110):

1) Setting directions;

   ➢ Defining the vision, purposes and directions.

2) Developing people;

   ➢ Enhancing teacher quality.

3) Refining and aligning the organization;

   ➢ Redesigning organizational structures, redefining roles and responsibilities.

   ➢ Involving students.

- ➢ Building relationships within the school community.

- ➢ Building relationships outside the school community.

- ➢ Involving parents and supporting families.

- ➢ Working with other schools.

4) Improving the teaching and learning programme;

- ➢ Improving the physical conditions for teaching and learning.

- ➢ Developing high expectations.

- ➢ Consistent school-wide policies on student behaviour.

- ➢ Enhancing teaching and learning.

- ➢ Using attainment data and observation.

- ➢ Redesigning and enriching the curriculum.

- ➢ A focus on student attainment outcomes.

In their discussion of the practices of successful leadership Day et al., (2011) emphasized the first category, which is defining the vision, purposes and directions. According to them, having a common vision among the staff facilitates achieving the school's mission. Indeed, the importance of the shared school vision comes from the notion that it filters every aspect of policies and practices within the individual school.

According to Reynolds (2010), lists of school effective practices, such as the two I presented above, not only are generated to enhance the students' academic attainment but also to develop the students behaviorally and affectively. Hence, the question is: What are the principal's characteristics and roles that are associated with students' academic attainment in particular? In this respect, Dinham (2005) conducted a mixed methods study in Australia with a view to exploring the role of principals in producing outstanding education outcomes in

years 7 to 10 in New South Wales' public schools. Data (including performance in standardized tests and public examinations) were collected from 38 secondary schools. Leadership was found to be a key factor in the achievement of outstanding students' academic attainment. The researcher attempted to find out how principal leadership contributes to the students' academic attainment. By interviewing the principals, seven characteristics could be identified as contributing to students' academic attainment (Dinham, 2005):

- External awareness and engagement.
- A bias towards innovation and action.
- Personal qualities and relationships.
- Vision, expectations, and a culture of success.
- Teacher learning, responsibility, and trust.
- Student support, common purpose, and collaboration.
- The core category: focus on students, learning, and teaching.

The researcher emphasized what he calls "the core category":

> *"These principals and their staff recognize that every effort must be made to provide an environment where each student can experience success and academic, personal and social growth" (Dinham, 2005, p.353).*

A key strength of this study was that it utilized a mixed methods approach, thereby allowing it to use different sources and types of data that provided it with a robust pool of information, in effect enhancing its trustworthiness. However, and as the researcher acknowledged, one limitation of Dinham's study (2005) is that the principals were from one educational system, namely public schools. It would have been more useful to my study if the researcher had included private schools in his study as well.

There is agreement that principals' values affect their managerial practices (Law & Dimmock, 2003; Parks & Thomas, 2007; Day et al., 2011). In Hong Kong, Law and Dimmock (2003) conducted an inductive grounded theory study into how values impact upon the principals' perception and management of school problems. Using purposive sampling, a total of 15 secondary school principals were selected (10 males and 5 females). Data were collected over a ten-month period through at least two rounds of face-to-face interviews, follow-up telephone interviews, and documentary analysis. The study concluded that there was a positive relationship between the principals' values and the educational outcomes (one of which was students' academic achievement). However, the study of Law and Dimmock (2003) left me as a reader with a crucial question; what are the values that contribute to effective schooling?

Parks and Thomas (2007) attempted to report on the values underpinning the leadership of five effective secondary school principals in Australia. For the purposes of data collection, the researchers utilized two qualitative methods; observation and interview. Data analysis resulted in three categories of values common among the five principals, as presented below (Parks & Thomas, 2007, p.223):

> ➢ Work values relating to interpersonal relationships: Compassionate, pleasant, collegial, willing to listen, approachable, understanding, working with others, true friendship, polite and helpful (caring for the well-being of others).

- Work values relating to operational style: Capable, competent, knowledgeable, wisdom, intellectual, efficient, effective, responsible, accountable and decisive.
- Work values relating to personal qualities/attributes: open, honest (truthful), ethical Practice, integrity and courageous (standing up for beliefs).

This study employed two qualitative methods (observation and interview) that helped to enhance the trustworthiness of its results. However, the transferability of the study seemed, to a certain extent, to have been violated. The selected school principals were deemed to be effective and yet the researchers have not mentioned clear criteria by which they determined their effectiveness. Furthermore, trustworthiness of this study may have been affected by the discarding of certain information, as evidenced by the researchers' following statement:

> *"Generalizations may be difficult to extract. Because of the severe triangulation process much data were discarded and thus other findings may have been masked." (Parks & Thomas, 2007, p.204)*

Nonetheless, Parks and Thomas's (2007) study provided general values that were adopted by effective school principals. Yet, many researchers consider promotion of 'change' in the learning cultures in schools as the most important value of effective educational leaders (Bond, 1998; Al-Kandari, 2003). Indeed, the distinction between a "leader" and a "manager" has usually been the extent to which they promote "change" (Dexter & Prince, 2007; Gleeson & Knights, 2008). School principals must set their sights on continuous improvement, and for that they must nurture and cultivate staff so that they can move in a

sustained direction (Fullan, 1999). It has to be stated, however, change occurs even with 'wobbly' leaders and with those who prefer continuity although, in either case, change might be a sort of undesirable one. In this concern, Leithwood and Louis (2012, p.4) state:

"Leaders act in environments marked variously by stability and change. These conditions interact in complementary relationships, and while stability is often associated with resistance and maintenance of the status quo, it is in fact difficult for leaders and other educators to leap forward from a wobbly foundation."

In his research article entitled "Principals as Leaders in a Culture of Change", Fullan (2002, P.6) suggested six guidelines for understanding the process of change:

➢ The goal is not to innovate the most, but rather to innovate selectively with coherence.

➢ It is not enough to have the best ideas, you must work through a process where others assess and come to find collective meaning and commitment to new ways.

➢ Appreciate early difficulties of trying something new — what he calls the implementation dip. It is important to know, for example, that no matter how much pre-implementation preparation; the first six months or so of implementation will be bumpy.

➢ Redefine resistance as a potential positive force. Naysayers sometimes have good points, and they are crucial concerning the politics of implementation. This doesn't mean that you listen to naysayers endlessly, but that you look for ways to address their concerns;

- Reculturing is the name of the game. Much change is structural, and superficial. The change required is in the culture of what people value and how they work together to accomplish it;

- Never a checklist, always complexity. There is no step-by-step shortcut to transformation; it involves the hard day-to-day work of reculturing.

However, it is, to a great extent, agreed that 'change' in schools, as social organizations, is a very complex phenomenon (Bond, 1998, Fullan, 1995; Leithwood, 1994). Bond (1998, P.1), for example, conducted a case study in two large secondary schools in Canada to provide an understanding of the process of change. These two schools were chosen as they were attempting to achieve change initiatives. The researcher used multiple data sources including a semi-structured interview, a teacher questionnaire and relevant school documents which provided his study with a pool of data. The findings confirmed the complexity and uniqueness of the two secondary schools. The findings revealed that leadership and school culture were interactive and interdependent during the course of the changes. Different staff members played different roles at different times during the change initiative. While the nature and extent of leadership and cultural influences were based on the development of shared behaviors, attitudes, and assumptions, they were mediated by variations in both schools' internal and external contexts. Specifically, the history, traditions, architecture, and organization structures of the schools, the reasons for initiating the changes, the backgrounds and experiences of the staff members, the composition of the student body, and the makeup of the community were significant contextual components in determining the influence of school leadership and school culture in the school change initiatives. The findings show

that meaningful and enduring change took time: time for readiness, planning, preparation, implementation, and continuation. Behaviours, attitudes, and assumptions were influenced over time through social interactions and staff involvement in the change process, with ownership, skill, mastery, and commitment building throughout the change initiative, rather than as something that existed in the early stages. The degree of staff support for the schools' organizational structures, which established the formal patterns of association, facilitated or inhibited opportunities for increased teacher leadership and collaboration in the schools during the course of the change.

In this sub-section, I reviewed literature on the functions, responsibilities and values of effective principals. It is suggested that there is a positive relationship between the students' academic attainment and the said functions, responsibilities and values (e.g. focus on students learning, student support, common purpose and promotion of change) (Bond, 1998; Law & Dimmock, 2003; Dinham, 2005; Reynolds, 2010). My study will seek to determine the extent to which such functions, responsibilities and values are adopted and practiced by public and private school principals. This might be helpful in understanding why private school students' academically outperformed public school students' at Kuwait University as measured by their final GPA.

Having discussed the functions, responsibilities and values of effective principals, I will engage with the leadership styles of school principals in the next sub-section. The importance of reviewing principals' leadership styles comes from the fact that there has been evidence that principals' leadership styles

impact students' academic attainment (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000; Robinson et al. 2008).

3.3.5.2 Models styles

In this sub-section, I discuss different models of leadership and then consider whether there are particular leadership styles that are associated with effective schooling and/or students' academic attainment.

Studies of leadership have identified a range of different models such as transactional, transformational, integrated, distributed and instructional leadership (Barnett et al., 2001; Leithwood & Louis, 2012). These leadership styles have common purpose, which is to improve student achievement. However, they differ significantly in terms of how to achieve this purpose.

While transactional leadership is based on an exchange relationship in which teachers and/ or staff members' compliance (effort, productivity, and loyalty) is exchanged for expected rewards, transformational leadership is concerned with raising teachers' and staff members' consciousness levels about the importance and value of the educational outcomes and ways of achieving them (Burns, 1978, cited in Barnett et al., 2001, p. 25). "Distributed leadership describes a collaborative approach to leadership exercised by the principal, assistant principals, department heads, teacher leaders, and other members of the school's improvement team" (Hallinger, 2009, p.13). In its simplest definition, 'instructional leadership' implies that the greatest focus of leadership is on classroom (Leithwood & Louis, 2012). In other words, a school principal, whose main concern is what occurs in classrooms and how s/he could improve the instructions practiced within them, is an instructional school leader. 'Integrated

leadership' has been used to describe a style which is a combination of transformational and instructional leadership (De Maeyer et al., 2007).

In their review of research from 1980-1995 exploring the relationship between principal leadership style and student achievement in a diverse set of cultural contexts including the United States, Canada, Singapore, England, Netherlands, Marshall Islands and Hong Kong, Hallinger and Heck (1998) conclude:

> *"Even taken as a group [the studies] they do not resolve the most important theoretical and practical issues concerning the means by which principals achieve an impact on school outcomes [students' academic attainment] and how contextual forces influence the exercise of leadership in schoolhouse. It is concluded that while substantial progress has been made over the past 15 years in understanding the principal's contribution to school effectiveness, the most important scholarly and practical work lies ahead."* (p.157)

Among the other principals' leadership styles, instructional leadership is the most common (Leithwood & Louis, 2012, p.6). According to Zepeda (1996, as cited in Poirier, 2009, p.21), for principals to produce a positive impact from their instructional leadership, they must utilize and emphasize the instructional supervisory role that includes an understanding and commitment to the following elements:

➢ Training for administrators as well as teachers in supervision, mentoring, and coaching.

➢ Sensitivity to the processes of professional growth and continuous improvement.

➢ Training in observation and reflection on practice in teacher preparation programmes.

- ➤ Integration of supervision with staff development, curriculum development, and school improvement systems.

- ➤ Improved professional practice both inside and outside the classroom.

- ➤ Continuous improvement as part of every educator's daily life.

- ➤ Focus on group processes in classroom rather than a one-on-one supervisory experience.

- ➤ Collegial assistance among educators, parents, and students.

- ➤ Use of terms such as colleague, consultation, and coaching to describe collaboration among professionals helping each other to improve practice.

The above-mentioned elements suggested by Zepeda (1996, as cited in Poirier, 2009, p.21) are not explicitly concerned with students' academic attainment. Indeed, all these elements are clearly concerned with teacher development. In other words, Zepeda did not obviously explain why instructional leadership should greatly devote their efforts for teacher development.

In a more explicit study, Leithwood and Louis (2012) attempted to identify the practices of instructional leadership that result in enhancing students' academic attainment. For five years, the researchers studied 43 districts across 9 states (USA), involving 180 elementary, middle and secondary schools. In order to address their research questions, the researchers utilized a questionnaire survey, interviews with the school principals and classroom observations. Their findings uncovered the following practices to be instructionally the core ones in fostering students' academic attainment (Leithwood & Louis, 2012, p. 65):

- ➤ Focusing the school on goals for student achievement.

- ➢ Focusing teachers' attention on goals for student achievement.

- ➢ Focusing on expectations for student achievement.

- ➢ Keeping track for teachers' professional development needs.

- ➢ Providing general support/ open door.

- ➢ Providing backup for teachers for student discipline and with parents.

- ➢ Providing mentoring opportunities for new teachers.

- ➢ Monitoring teachers' work in classroom.

- ➢ Providing instructional resources and materials.

As stated earlier in this sub-section, the focus of instructional leadership is on classroom. Indeed, as shown above, although the first three practices of instructional leaders can be said to be 'pupil focused' and the reset of these practices are 'teacher focused', they are all appeared to be concerned with improving classroom practice. Another important point is that Leithwood and Louis (2012, p.43) considered quantitative methods as being not very helpful in determining the relationship between leadership practices and students' academic attainment. Indeed, the greatest bulk of their conclusions were based on qualitative data such as interviews with the school principals and classroom observations. Nonetheless, the researchers acknowledged the complexity surrounding the leadership phenomenon. Perhaps this is why Leithwood and Louis (2012) did not explicitly recommend that school principals should adopt an instructional leadership style.

Robinson et al. (2008) conducted a meta-analysis to study the effects of transformational and instructional leadership on student academic attainment. The researchers analysed the results of 27 published studies of the relationship between leadership and students' academic attainment. Their findings

suggested that the average effect of instructional leadership on student attainment was three or four times that of transformational leadership. The researchers concluded, "The more leaders focus their relationships, their work, and their learning on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater their influence on student outcomes." (p. 635). However, the researchers could not assertively extract how leadership styles affect students' academic attainment. Indeed, although it is evident that research supports the notion that effective leadership contributes to effective schools, there is a need to identify the particular type of leadership style that would facilitate such a contribution. To answer this question, Barnett et al. (2001) conducted a study that involved a sample of 12 randomly selected secondary schools in the Sydney Metropolitan area in New South Wales, Australia. Fifteen randomly selected teachers from each school were requested to fill in questionnaires. The teachers were required to compare two key leadership approaches; transactional and transformational leadership. Although the researchers admitted the complexity in determining which of the two approaches is better, the researchers stated that they would advocate the transformational leadership style (no explicit explanation was given for their advocacy). They called for further research in order to obtain a clearer picture.

Also in Australia, Gurr and Drysdale (2005) employed a case study approach in two different states (Tasmania and Victoria). The sample included seven schools, selected according to a criterion based on the reputation of the schools (no details about "reputation" were provided). According to this 'reputation', the principals in these 7 schools were considered as effective educational leaders. The sample consisted of kindergarten, government primary schools, Catholic

primary schools, and secondary schools. Data were collected using different resources (for example, documents illustrating school achievements and student attainment, and interviews with a variety of people including the principal, school council chairperson, assistant principal, teachers, parents, and students). However, this study could not identify any particular style, due to the complex nature of leadership. Although the seven principals were considered effective leaders, they differed considerably in their leadership practices.

De Maeyer et al. (2007) administered a study in Belgium with a view to examining the effects of "integrated leadership", which they defined as a combination of transformational and shared instructional leadership, on two outcome measures: mathematics achievement, and mother tongue achievement. Data was randomly collected from the sampled students in their fourth grade (15 or 16 years of age) and the sixth grade (17 or 18 years of age) on the different output measures in all the Flemish schools (47 schools). The results revealed that integrated leadership had only an indirect effect on students' achievement.

The strength of De Maeyer et al.'s study hinges upon its control for many of the confounding variables, such as the mean IQ and family background. However, the study did not appear to fully answer its own research question, as researchers have acknowledged:

> *"Until now, we have not gained insight into how educational leadership can influence pupil achievement through the primary instructional process that takes place in the classroom. The question to be answered is: How does educational leadership influence class practices which in*

their turn influence learning processes?" (De Maeyeret al., 2007, p. 142).

Over the last decade, there has been a growing interest in 'distributed leadership', which I introduced and defined earlier in this sub-section. In this regard, Alma Harris (2003, p.125) defines distributed leadership as follows:

> *"A distributed view of leadership incorporates the activities of multiple groups of individuals in a school who work at guiding and mobilising staff in the instructional change process. It implies a social distribution of leadership where the leadership function is 'stretched over' the work of a number of individuals where the leadership task is accomplished through the interaction of multiple leaders. A distributed perspective on leadership is less about role and more about behaviour. Leadership is no longer an individual matter but is spread throughout an organization with leader roles overlapping and shifting as different development needs arise. It suggests inter-dependency rather than dependency embracing how leaders of various kinds and in various roles share responsibility."*

Heck and Hallinger (2009) carried out a longitudinal study to examine the effects of distributed leadership on students' maths achievement in 195 elementary schools in one American state over a 4-year period. Using multilevel latent change analysis, the research found significant effects of distributed leadership on students' achievement in math. Features of these examples of distributed leadership were associated with increased academic attainment were:

➢ Fostering curricular standards.

➢ Developing instruction, providing tangible support for students

➢ Improving professional capacity, sustaining a focus on academic improvement

However, like the above-mentioned studies, and due to the complexity of the leadership phenomenon, Heck and Hallinger (2009, p.659) acknowledged:

"Our results offer little direct insight into which leadership practices should be distributed or how they should be distributed among different staff roles."

According to Hallinger (2009), Leithwood et al., (2006) drew a very useful and central conclusion concerning the interpretation of research findings of effective school leadership practices. Leithwood et al., (2006) noted that effective school leaders tend to enact the "same basic leadership practices" across schools, but in a way that is responsive to the particular contexts. This conclusion, Hallinger (2009) argued, "is broadly consistent with general contingency leadership theory, suggests that those who attempt to define successful school leadership practices must be content with a reasonably high level of abstraction" (P.12). Indeed, in their study of 13 instructionally effective elementary schools in California, for example, Hallinger and Murphy (1986) sought to investigate the nature of differences in schools that were instructionally effective for low SES and high SES students. One of their findings was that:

"Defining a shared mission among the individual school was important in both sets of social contexts, but that the practice was enacted quite differently by the school leaders. In the low SES effective schools, clear, specific, measurable goals were prominently displayed around the school and featured in the principal's active efforts to create a shared vision. In the high SES effective schools, interviews with different stakeholder groups revealed clear understanding, as well as strong agreement and support for school's academic mission. Yet, in contrast to the low SES schools, this vision was embedded in the culture of the school, even in the absence of clear, specific measurable

goals. The principal's actions involved supporting and developing a strong academic culture rather than "turning around" a weak culture through goal direction." (Cited in Hallinger, 2009, p.13)

This suggests that although the practices of distributed leadership can differ according to the context in which these practices are exercised, they still can be successful so long as there is a clear and shared sense of mission among the school staff.

One evident aspect of principals who exercise distributed leadership is that they are keen in getting their teachers and staff involved in the process of decision-making (Leithwood et al., 2006; Hallinger, 2009; Hulpia & Devos, 2010). Fortunately, similar to the context of my study's inquiry, there have been some studies that compared public and private school principals in the extent to which they involve their teachers in decision-making. Some of these studies are discussed below.

In their study in which 36 countries participated, the OECD conducted a large-scale study in 2000 (see sub-section 3.3.3 for further discussion of this research). This study uncovered the following important results:

➢ Private school students academically outperform public school students.

➢ There are positive correlations between the extent to which teachers are involved in decision-making and students' academic attainment.

➢ Private schools are more effective than public schools in the extent to which they involve their teachers in the process of decision-making.

Akomolafe (2012) carried out an empirical study to examine the administrative effectiveness of principals of public and private secondary schools in Ekiti State - Nigeria. A sample of 295 teachers were chosen randomly of which 191 were public school teachers and 104 from private schools. The researcher found that private school teachers were more effective than their counterparts from public schools in getting their teachers involved in the process of decision-making. However, a contrasting finding emerged from Iqbal's study undertaken in Pakistan (2012). Iqbal (2012) aimed to qualitatively compare the public and private secondary schools on leadership styles and management practices. A selective sample of three public and three private secondary schools were chosen as case studies from Lahore city. The secondary school principals, teachers, students of 9th and 10th classes and their parents were identified as stakeholders of these schools. Interview protocols for each stakeholder, observations and document analysis were used as instruments of data collection. Sixteen interviews were conducted for each case that included the principal of school, five teachers, five students of 9th and 10th class and five parents of these students. In this way, 96 interviews were conducted for these cases including 48 interviews from public school and 48 from private schools. It was found that the public schools are more effective than private schools in involving their teachers in decision-making. It is difficult, however, to determine why Iqbal (2012) findings were in contrast to those of the OECD (2000) and Akomolafe (2012). One possible reason lies with the nature of the methodologies employed in these studies. OECD (2000) and Akomolafe (2012) utilized quantitative methodologies by which they could report mono-casual relationship between the two variables. Iqbal (2012), on the other hand, used

qualitative methods with a small sample. In addition, it is important not to overlook the possibility that the differences between public and private school principals in the extent to which they get their teachers and staff involved in decision-making might be context-related. In this respect, my study will investigate the situation in the Kuwaiti context.

Yet, one would be interested in knowing why students academically perform better when their teachers experience high level of involvement in terms of decision making within their schools. Indeed, some researchers appeared to be interested more in why teacher-involvement in decision-making positively affects their practices. For example, Hulpia and Devos (2010) conducted a qualitative study in Belgium to explore the relation between teacher involvement in decision-making and teachers' organizational commitment. A purposeful sampling of eight secondary schools of extreme cases (4 high and 4 low potential schools) was carried out based on the data obtained from the 46 schools. Using semi-structured interviews with teachers and principals, the researchers found that the greater teacher involvement, the more committed the teachers are to the school and to their profession. Likewise, Louis et al. (2010) administered a quantitative study in Canada to determine the effects of involving teachers in decision-making on students' academic attainment. Data were collected by questionnaire survey from a sample of 2,570 elementary, intermediate and secondary schools teachers. The researchers also utilized test scores on state-mandated tests of language and mathematics at several grade levels over three years to match them with the data collected from the teachers. The findings revealed that the more teachers are involved in decision-making,

the stronger working relationships and the higher students' academic attainment.

As implied in this sub-section, although there is strong evidence that principals contribute to effective schooling and students' academic attainment, studies have not been able to conclude that one particular leadership style is a feature of effective schools. Indeed, the reviewed studies indicated that leadership is a very complex phenomenon and might not be well understood without exploring the context in which leadership is practiced. In the context of my study, as stated in Chapter 2, while the degree of autonomy public school principals enjoy as leaders or managers can be said to be limited, private school principals, to a large extent, are autonomous from the Ministry of Education in relation to setting their policies and practices (Houssan et al., 2002). Therefore, in the next section, I review literature on school management autonomy to explore the extent to which this might have an impact on school effectiveness and students' academic attainment.

School management autonomy

In general, schools that enjoy school-based management (also called autonomous schools) are autonomous in establishing their missions, goals, policies, recruiting, programmes, action plans, budget, organizational structure and work procedures (Cheng, 1996).

Over the past three decades, there has been a growing concern in many countries over the failure of schools to provide students with the quality of education needed to compete in today's global workforce (Caui, 2000). In order to meet such concerns, many educational policy makers initiated reform in the

hopes of improving educational outcomes. In order to be productive, it is advocated that educational reform efforts must focus less on stricter bureaucratic control, and more on giving control to the individual school site (Myer, 1997; Caui, 2000). One such form of decentralization is the implementation of site-based management (Caui, 2000, P.1). According to Phillips (1998, P.14-15):

> "School-based management was central to many proposals. It offered local control of decisions, equitable allocation of resources, effective use of resources, teacher empowerment, and diversity as a consequence of market driven responsiveness to community needs. Also, school-based management was expected to promote the correlates of effective schools such as improved student outcomes, strong instructional leadership, long-term academic improvement, positive attitudes and behaviour, more successful programs, and more effective schools. Offsetting the benefits, teachers, administrators and parents will spend more time planning and being involved in the decision making process."

James et al., (1996) investigated the impact of public versus private primary school management upon school cost and efficiency in 15 Indonesian provinces. Using school-level expenditures, enrolments, and examination scores. Private school management was found to be more efficient than public school management in achieving higher students' academic attainment. They attributed this result to the increased autonomy in terms of budget and enrolments that private schools enjoy. Bandur (2012) also conducted study in Indonesia to examine primary schools' autonomy and the effect on students' academic attainment. The research used a mixed method design, which included a questionnaire survey of for 504 school council members,

complemented by 42 interviews and focus group discussion with all relevant stakeholders. Bandur found that increased levels of school autonomy led to the improvements in teaching and learning environments and student academic attainment.

In Canada, Myer (1997) studied the perceptions held by principals and school district administrators of relationships between school-based management and student achievement. Data were obtained through the administration of a questionnaire survey to all 21 principals in an Alberta school district. A purposive sample of 10 principals and district administrators was administered a semi-structured interview, and a document survey and analysis were undertaken. Questionnaire content formed the basic structure by which the data from all sources were analyzed. Evidence emerged of perceptions of some causal relationships between school-based management and student achievement. It was also found that there is a positive influence between school-based management and principals' instructional leadership, notably in setting and monitoring school-wide academic standards. The researcher concluded:

"School-based management demonstrated a focus on the enhancement of student achievement as a process outcome. Principals and district administrators were cognizant of the focus. School-based management was exerting a positive influence on the quality of school programs. Such influence was not uniform, with the nature and degree of the causality unclear, although flexibility emerged as one important element. Better resource use, enhanced instructional policy and program initiatives, goal setting, accountability, and enhanced professional development also emerged as contributing elements" (P.197)

In a different setting, Giladi and Shild (2005) investigated the extent to which school-based management has an impact upon students' academic attainment in mathematics, languages and science in Jerusalem. The researchers compared two groups of schools; those with school-based management (637 schools) and traditional schools (809 schools). The results indicated that the students' scores in based-management schools were higher than in traditional schools (Cited in Townsend et al, 2007, p. 356). Likewise, Cheung and Mok (2007) administered empirical research in Hong Kong investigating whether school autonomy enhances students learning. They used a cross-sectional survey research involving 31 secondary schools, 1,119 teachers and 7,063 students. The results indicated that the greater autonomy schools enjoy, the higher the students' levels of attainment. Cook (2007), in his review of literature in this field in the USA, also found positive effects of school autonomy on student academic attainment. Nonetheless, he suggested that further research is needed before making generalizations to other contexts.

In a study related to my own specific area of interest, Nabhani (2003) sought to identify in the Lebanon. School factors that promoted students' academic success in higher education. The underlying assumption of her study was that effective decentralized private schools have strong positive cultures, visionary leadership and adequate resources to remain effective and open to improvement. The sample of her study consisted of five private secondary schools in Beirut. These schools were selected based on their reputation for decades of student success on national and university entrance examinations and achievement in private universities. All the five schools were self-managed schools and they determined their missions, standards and reform. Using a

combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, the findings suggested that private schools are effective in preparing their students rigorously for academic and social success in higher education due to their autonomy. However, a limitation of Nabhani's (2003) study was the non-inclusion of public schools in the sample.

In examining the situation in Kuwait, my study will investigate the extent which public and private schools are autonomous in establishing their missions, goals, policies, recruiting, programmes, action plans, budget, organizational structure and work procedures and whether, or not, this autonomy is a factor to which private school students superiority at Kuwait University might be attributed.

In summary, my review of the school leadership effectiveness literature has indicated that although there seemed to be a growing interest in distributed leadership, no one style of leadership has been found in all effective schools. Nevertheless, there are certain areas related to effective leaders that appeared to be important: principals' core functions, the degree of autonomy they have in leading and managing their school and the extent to which they involve teachers in decision making. I will investigate these areas in the context of public and private schools in Kuwait.

3.3.6 Teachers in school effectiveness research

As discussed earlier in sub-section (3.3.3), teachers and teaching have been included in the lists of school effectiveness characteristics for as long as such lists have been in production. Edmonds (1979) was the first to identify the factors that contribute to effective schools, and he placed a special emphasis on teachers. Since then, other studies have been conducted to examine and

compare different dimensions in terms of teachers and teaching. In this section, I focus on studies that explored the characteristics of effective teachers and their possible impact upon students' academic attainment. This includes teachers' level of qualification, teachers' years of experience, teachers' personal and professional qualities, and other contributing factors such as in-service training and teacher pay as well as students' assessment feedback. This sub-section begins with discussing the characteristics and competencies of effective teachers.

3.3.6.1 Characteristics and competencies of effective teachers

Educators can recognize effective teaching when they see it. Yet, even with decades of research, they still grapple with the basic question: What does it mean to be an effective teacher? (No author's name - Harvard Educational Review, 2012). However, and in general, "teacher effectiveness is a matter of the degree to which a teacher achieves desired effects upon students. Teacher performance is the way in which a teacher behaves in the process of teaching, while teacher competence is the extent to which the teacher possesses the knowledge and skills (competencies) defined as necessary or desirable qualifications to teach" (Dunkin, 1997, p.41).

According to, The American Association of School Administrators, effective teachers are those who (cited in Cheung et al., 2008, p. 624):

> ➤ Handle discipline through prevention.
> ➤ Use systematic, yet varied, instructional techniques.
> ➤ Are knowledgeable of subject matter, and task oriented while tailoring teaching to student needs.

- Are highly flexible, enthusiastic, and imaginative, and emphasize perceptual meanings more than facts and events.

- Believe in their own abilities, and have high expectations.

- Are democratic in their approach, and display warmth, care and concern when interacting with students.

- Are readily accessible outside class.

Cheung et al (2008) carried out a qualitative study in Hong Kong to determine how outstanding teachers conceptualize teacher effectiveness. Data were collected using interviews with 4 primary and 11 secondary school teachers who were award winners of the Pillar Education Foundation in the years 1998–2002. The study generated the following characteristics of effective teachers:

1- Personal qualities

- Caring for students.

- Interest in the subject taught.

- Patience.

- Being responsible.

- Facing adversities with courage and not giving up easily.

- Being fair.

- Mission-minded.

- Respectfulness.

- Enthusiasm.

2- Professional qualities

- Excellent subject knowledge.

- Teaching students both subject knowledge and attitudes.

- Clear and in-depth delivery of lessons.

- Ability to enhance students' understanding.

- Ability to arouse students' learning interest.

- Basing teaching on students' abilities.

- Effectively managing the classroom.

- Having good relationships with students (inside and outside classroom).

- Being a role model for students.

- Lifelong learning.

- Helping students to obtain good academic results.

- Teaching students the skills to prepare for examinations.

- Ability to handle duties other than teaching.

- Understanding and fitting in the needs of colleagues.

- Having good communication with parents.

Irrespective of some of the methodological shortcomings of this study (e.g. using unequal number of participants from primary and secondary schools without justification), this list seems to be a holistic one as it implied that teachers should be seen as an entity that can affect pupils in and out of the classroom. Although most research conducted to probe effective teachers' characteristics has focused on processes in the classroom, nonetheless, it is important not to ignore the nature of the relationship between the students and their teachers outside the classroom setting.

In China, Chang (2011) examined the perceptions of 617 primary and secondary school students (aged 6 to 16) of effective teachers. These students were nominated by teachers as Chinese gifted students (outstanding

performances in school subjects). The researcher utilised a checklist by Feldhusen (1997), which included 25 characteristics and 14 competencies of effective teachers. The results showed that the students emphasized the following characteristics and competencies that an effective teacher must possess:

(A) Characteristics

- ➢ Can see things from students' points of view.
- ➢ Respects individuality, personal self-images, and personal integrity.
- ➢ Accepts responsibility for individual children.
- ➢ Innovative and experimental, rather than conforming.
- ➢ Self-confident.
- ➢ Well-organized.
- ➢ Seeks new solutions through continued learning.
- ➢ Imaginative, flexible, open to change, stimulating.
- ➢ Enthusiastic.
- ➢ Support for students.

(b) Competencies

- ➢ Skilled in teaching higher thinking abilities, including creativity and problem solving
- ➢ Adept at questioning techniques
- ➢ Excellent at developing (or selecting) teaching methods and materials.
- ➢ Knowledge of the nature and needs of the students.

➢ Direct individualized learning and teaching.

➢ Focus on process as well as product.

Unlike most of the studies conducted in field, the main strength of Chang's (2011) study is that it sought to explore students' perceptions. Indeed, the students are the consumers/clients of teaching. In my opinion, it is vital that students' perceptions of effective teachers and teaching that are investigated, in order to gain a better understanding of this phenomenon.

In the same context as my own study, Kuwait, AL-rasheedi, (1998), conducted research aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of primary schoolteachers in public schools and to identify the factors which could hinder this effectiveness. Using different methods such as school scores, achievement tests and interviews, the findings indicated that the most successful teachers were those who; (1) presented lessons clearly, (2) paid more attention to the entire class and (3) were less inclined to use punishment. Additionally, forty-eight teachers selected randomly were interviewed to establish those factors, which influence and hinder the effectiveness of teachers in the classroom. In the teachers' views, the key factors were class size, their teaching load, the availability of modern teaching aids, and the provision of in-service courses. Considered to be of less importance but a negative influence were the low social status of teachers in the community, their low salary levels, the school administration's maltreatment of teachers, lack of moral and material incentives, lack of parental co-operation, inaccurate assessment of teachers by their superiors, and the indifferent attitude of some teachers towards improving their teaching standards. No research has been carried out in Kuwait secondary schools and my study will provide important information about that phase of education in Kuwait. AL-rasheedi's

(1998) study has been inspirational to the design of my research methodology. This will be discussed in the conclusion-subsection.

The teacher effectiveness literature has been replete with studying factors that are associated with teachers and teaching which are believed to have effects on students' academic attainment. Some of the most researched factors in this respect are; teacher experience, teachers' in-service training, teacher pay, class size and assessment feedback. These are discussed below.

3.3.6.2 Teachers' experience and in-service training

It is suggested that teacher experience and teacher in-service training programmes are important factors in shaping their effectiveness (Aaronson et al., 2007; Onderi & Croll, 2008; Harris & Sass, 2011). Odden et al. (2004) concluded, "teachers with three years or more years of experience generally are more effective [in improving students' achievement] than less-experienced teachers"(p.131). Indeed, although there are few studies that suggested the opposite, the mainstream of the relevant studies can be said to concur with Odden et al.'s (2004) conclusion. Some of these studies are discussed below.

Mercy (1996) examined the relationship between teachers' length of experience and students' academic attainment. Quantitative data were collected from 11 teachers and 375 secondary school students such as students test scores and teachers experience. A positive correlation was identified between students' academic attainment and teachers' experience, as the students of more experienced teachers gained higher test scores. Likewise, Jepsen (2005) conducted a survey to investigate the relationship between teachers' experience and students' academic attainment. Data were collected by utilizing an

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extensive teacher survey in addition to administrative data (database) for a representative national sample of more than 10,000 students (200 schools). The analysis revealed that teacher experience was found to be a significant predictor of students' academic attainment. Similar findings were found in a study administered in Chicago by Aaronson et al., (2007). The researchers examined the relationship between teacher experience and students academic attainment. The sample of their study consisted of 88 secondary schools. The results also indicated positive relationships between the said variables. Also, in their meta-analysis, Rob Greenwald and his colleagues (1996) concluded "resource variables that attempt to describe the quality of teachers (teacher ability, teacher education, and teacher experience) show very strong relations with student achievement." (p.361)

Few studies that suggested negative correlations between teacher's experience and students' academic attainment. For instance, Hanushek et al., (1998) examined the role of teacher differences on students' academic attainment. The researchers used database called Harvard/ UTD Texas School Project (more than 200,000 students in more than 3,000 public schools in Texas). The findings indicated that initial years of teaching have a negative effect on student academic attainment. Students who are assigned with new teachers (with one or two years of experience) are in advantage position in comparison with their peers who are taught by teachers with three-plus years of experience. Like Mercy (1996), Greenwald et al., (1996), Jepsen (2005) and Aaronson et al., (2007), Hanushek et al., (1998) did not explain why teacher experience impacted the students' academic attainment. In my view, the reason for their inability to explain how teacher experience affects their students' academic

attainment lies with the nature of their methodologies, which were all quantitative. It clearly seems that quantitative designs are able to provide causal relationships between the study's variables, but they obviously fail to explain such causal relationships.

In terms of the relationships between teacher in-service training and students' academic attainment, in the Netherlands, an experiment was carried out by Sijde (1989). He sought to find out whether a brief professional development programme could impact on the academic attainment of students' in the Netherlands. The researcher developed a training programme for 33 intermediate schoolteachers who participated in the study on a voluntary basis. The programme included developing subject knowledge and skills such as classroom management and monitoring pupils' progress. Classroom structured-observation and students' achievement test were conducted after the experiment to determine the effects of the programme on the students' academic attainment. The study revealed that there was a positive relationship between teachers' in-service training and the students' academic attainment. Harris and Sass (2011) also studied the effect of in-service training programmes on primary, intermediate and secondary school students' academic attainment in Florida. They analysed a data set that included test scores of over one million students and the number of in-service training programmes attended by these students' teachers. The results suggested that attendance by teachers on in-service training programmes enhances students' academic attainment. Likewise, in their review of research on the impact of teachers' in-service training upon students' academic attainment, Vicki et al. (2008) suggest that well-developed in-service training have positive impact upon students' academic

attainment. Similarly, Onderi & Croll (2008) administered an empirical study of 109 teachers in Kenya to determine the relationship between teachers' in-service training and students' academic attainment. They, too, found that development and in-service training have a positive effect on the students' academic attainment.

In the USA, Sato et al., (2008), examined how mathematics and science intermediate and secondary school teachers' classroom practices (assessment strategies) were affected by a professional development programme. Using a 3-year longitudinal study, comparisons were conducted between 9 teachers who participated in the programme and 7 teachers who did not. The researchers interviewed and surveyed the 16 teachers and their students twice annually. The results showed that the treatment group (the 9 teachers) began the study with lower mean scores than the comparison group (the 7 teachers) in all the dependent variables (six assessment dimensions). By the end of the second year, the treatment group had higher mean scores on all dimensions, with statistically significant gains on four of the assessment dimensions; and continued to demonstrate substantially higher scores in the third year. This suggests that teachers' in-service trainings improve their effectiveness, at least in relation to enhancing their students' academic attainment. Unlike Sijde (1989), Onderi & Croll (2008), Vicki et al. (2008), and Harris and Sass (2011), who all used quantitative research designs, the qualitative part of Sato et al.'s (2008) study, namely the interviews with the teachers, enabled them to explain their finding. The interviews with teachers in the treatment group attributed these results to the effectiveness of the in-service training they attended in

which they learnt new effective ways of providing their students with the kind of feedback that is helpful for the students to improve their learning.

It is also worth stating that in the same context of my study, evidence had been found that indicated the scarcity of in-service training programmes for primary school teachers working in public sector in Kuwait (AL-rasheedi, 1998). It was, therefore, important to investigate this phenomenon in more depth in comparing public and private secondary schools in Kuwait.

In my study I investigated the extent to which there are differences between public and private school teachers in relation to the experience and in-service training programmes to determine whether these two factors may contribute to an understanding of why private school students academically outperformed their counterparts from public schools at Kuwait University as measured by their final GPA.

3.3.6.3 Teachers' pay

There are studies that indicated that the vast majority of the variations in teacher effects on students' academic attainment are unexplained by traditional teacher characteristics and some of this research suggested teacher salary to be a helpful factor in explaining students' attainment (Stronge, 2010). For example, Stronge (2010) found that 'the combination of qualifications, gender, age, experience and other identifiable ratings account for less than 1/100 of the variance of teacher effectiveness" (p.81). Teacher's salary of public and private school teachers was found to differ significantly in different countries throughout the world (e.g. U.S. Department of Education, 1997; Lavy 2002; Kingdon & Teal, 2007). Most importantly though, Al-rasheedi (1998) found that teacher pay in

Kuwait, appeared to relate to the effectiveness of primary public schoolteachers and I wanted to know whether this is the case in public and private secondary schooling in Kuwait. Accordingly, the possible relationship between teachers' pay and students' academic attainment is discussed below.

Rivkin et al. (2005) conducted a study entitled: "Teachers, Schools, and Academic Achievement in Texas". Using a data set that included the students test scores in mathematics and reading, and teachers' salaries, the researchers suggested that linking teacher pay to teacher performance could be an effective way for enhancing students' academic attainment. However, according to the U.S. Department of Education (1997), although private school students do academically better than public school students, private school teacher were found to earn smaller salaries compared with their public school counterparts but, it was also found that "private school teachers were more likely than public school teachers to be highly satisfied with their working conditions" (Department of Education, 1997, p.13). Kingdon and Teal (2007) also attempted to examine the relationship between teachers' pay and students' academic attainment in India. After controlling for pupils' ability, parental background and the resources available, data was collected by surveying a selective sample consisting of 902 pupils across 20 public schools and 10 private schools (junior and secondary schools). The number of teachers sampled by the survey was 172. The results showed that students' achievement is improved by increasing teachers' pay. The researchers attributed this result to the motivation of teachers due to higher wages. They argued "in private schools, the flexibility of managers to set wages and dismiss lax teachers means that efficiency wages are an incentive lever that managers can use to enhance teacher incentives. Since government-funded

teaching jobs in India are mostly permanent contracts with little chance of dismissal, efficiency wages are not available as an effort-motivating device in the public school sector" (Kingdon & Teal, 2007, p. 484).

There seemed to be many exogenous variables when studying the relationships between teachers' pay and students' academic attainment such as working conditions and principals' power of dismissing poorly performing teachers. In order to control for the exogenous variables surrounding the relationships between teachers' pay and students' academic attainment, Muralidharan and Sundararaman (2009) carried out a randomized evaluation of a teacher incentive programme implemented across a large representative sample of 200 schools (100 control versus 100 treatment schools) in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. The programme provided bonus payments to teachers based on the average improvement of their students' test scores in independently administered learning assessments (with a mean bonus of 3% of annual pay). At the end of two years of the programme, students in incentive schools (treatment schools) performed significantly better than those in control schools in math and language tests respectively. They scored significantly higher on "conceptual" as well as "mechanical" components of the tests, suggesting that the gains in test scores represented an actual increase in learning outcomes. Incentive schools also performed better on subjects for which there were no incentives, suggesting positive spillovers. Indeed, when Lavy (2002) studied the reason why teacher's pay positively correlate with the students' academic attainment, he concluded that teacher's pay plays an important role in motivating teachers towards productivity. He also concluded, "The empirical

results suggest that schools' and teachers' group monetary incentives caused significant gains in many dimensions of students' outcomes". (P.1286)

Taking into consideration the working conditions and principals' power of dismissing poorly performing teachers as possible exogenous variables, I investigated the extent to which teacher pay might contribute to an understanding of why private school students academically outperformed their counterparts from public schools at Kuwait University as measured by their final GPA.

3.3.6.4 Assessment & feedback

It is agreed that that one of the determinants of teacher effectiveness is the strategy of assessment and feedback they use in evaluating and enhancing their students' academic attainment (Stiggins, 2002; Gavin & Gerrit, 2008). Assessment and feedback have also been stated in a considerable number of school effectiveness lists of characteristics (see Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). They are also suggested to have positive relationships with students' academic attainment when used effectively (Gavin & Gerrit, 2008). On this basis, some relevant studies are discussed below. At first, I have to say that the related literature appeared to use assessment and feedback as synonyms. However, and as I understand the two terminologies; assessment is a summative evaluation whether feedback is a formative one.

In his review of the related literature, Dylan (2011) discussed different definitions of the term 'assessment'. He argues that what constitutes assessment is rather too complex to grasp although he concludes "there is now a strong body of theoretical and empirical work that suggests that integrating assessment with

instruction may well have unprecedented power to increase student engagement and to improve learning outcomes" (p.13). And he adds, "For assessment to support learning [formative feedback], it must provide guidance about the next steps in instruction and must be provided in a way that encourages the learner to direct energy towards growth"(p.13).

In an article entitled "Assessment Crisis: The Absence of Assessment for Learning", Stiggins (2002) criticized the American system in assessing students in which the students are almost only assessed by using summative evaluations, as he stated:

> "We are a nation obsessed with the belief that the path to school improvement is paved with better, more frequent, and more intense standardized testing. The problem is that such tests, ostensibly developed to "leave no student behind," are in fact causing major segments of our student population to be left behind because the tests cause many to give up in hopelessness -- just the opposite effect from that which politicians intended". (P.759)

Therefore, Stiggins (2002) proposed that teachers should engage with assessment comprehensively. According to him, a teacher can do this by (p.761):

➢ Translating classroom assessment results into frequent descriptive feedback (versus judgmental feedback) for students, providing them with specific insights as to how to improve;

➢ Continuously adjusting instruction based on the results of classroom assessments;

> ➢ Engaging students in regular self-assessment, with standards held constant so that students can watch themselves grow over time and thus feel in charge of their own success.

According to Stiggins and Chappuis (2005) "evidence gathered over decades from around the world reveals strong achievement gains and reduced achievement score gaps when teachers implement student-involved classroom assessment [formative feedback] practices in support of student learning in their classrooms." (P.11). Indeed, Black and Wiliam (1998) reviewed research to examine the relationships between formative feedback and student achievement. In order to address the possible relationships, the researchers reviewed more than 250 research articles. Like Stiggins and Chappuis's (2005) remark, Black and Wiliam (1998) concluded, "improved formative assessment helps low achievers more than other students and so reduces the range of achievement while raising achievement overall" (p. 141).

Stiggins and Chappuis (2005) suggested that in order to implement effective formative feedback it must:

> ➢ Always be driven by a clearly articulated purpose.
> ➢ Arise from and accurately reflect clearly specified and appropriate achievement expectations.
> ➢ Be capable of accurately reflecting the intended targets and are used as teaching tools along the way to proficiency.
> ➢ Be delivered into the hands of their intended users in a timely, understandable, and helpful manner.

A study in New Zealand of 3469 secondary school students' perceptions of assessment and its links to students' academic attainment was carried out by Gavin and Gerrit (2008). By means of a self-report questionnaire survey, the findings revealed that assessment in general and feedback in particular lead to higher levels of academic attainment. However, Gavin and Gerrit's (2008) study could not explain how formative feedback led to higher levels of academic attainment. This might be because its quantitative nature.

In their mixed-methods study, Anton et al., (2012) attempted to explore how assessment and feedback information was received and responded to. The researchers conducted a two-year intervention project involving six Norwegian upper secondary schools. They used a selective sample of 679 students and 314 teachers. Utilizing questionnaires and focus group interviews, the findings showed that there were significant differences in how students and teachers perceive feedback practices. The findings also indicated that feedback practice is, to some extent, more subject-related than school-dependent. Participants, in general, regarded assessment and feedback as something that follows a test or an assignment. However, it was experienced in a variety of ways: (1) the teacher works through a test or assignment when returning these to the students after corrections, (2) student presentations of projects, (3) group-work and (4) discussions between the teacher and the students (p.27).

Smith and Gorard (2005) also conducted a mixed-methods study, in Wales, aimed to study the effect of formative feedback on secondary school students' academic attainment. In order to control for the students attitudes' and background, the researchers allocated 104 students to four teaching groups for

all their subjects (26 students in each group). Of these four groups, three continued with the existing school policy of allocating marks and grades to pieces of assessed work, with minimal associated comments from the teacher, throughout the year. The fourth group, designated the treatment group, did not receive any summative marks or grades for any work at all. Instead, their teachers agreed to provide more individualised formative feedback. Using standardized tests, after the treatment, the result showed that progress in the treatment group (formative feedback only) was inferior to that of the other three groups. The researchers commented:

> *"We must conclude on the basis of the evidence here that, in this school, the approach adopted for the treatment group was ineffective overall, and somewhat unpopular with the students as well." (p.37)*

Vollmeyer and Rheinberg (2005) also administered an intervention. Two hundred and eleven university students (age 19-24) and secondary school students (age 17-19) in Potsdam, Germany, participated in their study. 105 participants (treatment group) were given formative feedback while 106 did not get this information (control group). The two groups took a short course (90 minutes) in a biology lab. In this case, however, the results showed that not only did the formative feedback improve academic attainment but also it enhanced the learners' ability to apply their knowledge. The researchers recommended that teachers should use formative feedback because it is motivating. They added that "announcing feedback improves learning strategies. Learners work more carefully, once they know that teachers check their learning outcomes" (p.601).

No studies have been undertaken of the assessment systems in Kuwait secondary schools and therefore there is a need to explore what is taking place. My study will investigate if there are differences in the assessment and feedback procedures between public and private schools in Kuwait and will consider whether these differences may contribute to an explanation of why private school students outperform their publicly educated peers in Kuwait University in terms of the final GPA scores.

3.3.6.5 Class size

As discussed earlier, elementary school teachers in Kuwait, wherein my study was carried out, believed that class size has an impact on their effectiveness (AL-rasheedi, 1998). This has also been confirmed recently in a study conducted by Kuwait National Assembly (2012) in which large class size was considered as one of the problems public education in Kuwait is encountering. To explore whether there is evidence from other contexts to support this view, I investigated the literature relating to class size. This is discussed below.

Literature on the effects of class size has emphasized that class size has strong relationships with teachers' effectiveness and students' academic attainment. According to the U.S. Department of Education (1997), "Many school reform efforts have focused on the organization and management of schools in the search for ways to increase school effectiveness. Public and private schools, in the aggregate, are organized differently in terms of school and class size" (p.14). They also added that public schools in the USA, in general, have larger class sizes compared with private schools.

Greenwald and his colleagues (1996) conducted a meta-analysis (38 research articles) to examine the factors that are associated with students' academic attainment. Two meta-analytic methods, combining significance testing and effect magnitude estimation, were employed in the analyses. The results indicated that class size is a strong factor in predicting students' academic attainment. The smaller the class sizes the higher the students' attainment. Likewise, Odden et al. (2004) conducted a meta-analysis to assess school effects on students' academic attainment. They concluded that smaller class sizes (less than 20 students) could improve student achievement scores. Similarly, in their study of the factors that effect teacher effectiveness and students' academic attainment in the USA, Hanushek et al., (1998), found that class size, in general, has a positive correlations with students' academic attainment. In other words, smaller class sizes tend to facilitate higher achievement.

In Switzerland, Brühwiler and Blatchford (2011) investigated the impact of class size upon students' academic attainment. The research sample consisted of 49 teachers and 898 elementary and secondary public school students. The research instruments included achievement tests, student questionnaire and teacher questionnaire. The results indicated that smaller classes resulted in higher students' academic attainment. To some extent, Corak and Lauzon (2009) reached similar results to those of Brühwiler and Blatchford (2011). Corak and Lauzon (2009) studied the relationship between secondary school students' (15-year-old) academic attainment and class size in five Canadian provinces. Using a questionnaire and achievement tests, the results revealed that smaller class sizes tend to enhance students' academic attainment.

There seemed to be an agreement that smaller class sizes tend to enhance the students' academic attainment (Greenwald et al. 1996; Brühwiler & Blatchford, 2011). My study will investigate this issue by comparing this aspect of public and private secondary schools in Kuwait to see whether this can help to explain the academic superiority of private school students' compared with their counterparts from public schools at Kuwait University, as measured by the students' final GPA.

Having reviewed the teacher effectiveness literature, it appeared that more effective teachers would result in academically better students. I have also been informed about the factors that had to be taken into consideration when comparing public and private schools. These factors include characteristics and competencies of effective teachers, teachers' in-service training, teachers' experience, and teachers' pay as well as strategies of assessment and feedback.

3.3.7 Parental involvement

As discussed earlier in this chapter, parental involvement has been identified as one of the key characteristics of effective schooling in many lists of school effectiveness (Mortimore et al., 1988; Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000; Bergeson 2002). Its presence in these lists are the result of studies that have investigated the relationship between parental involvement and students' academic attainment.

Having reviewed the parental involvement literature, one could argue that researchers differ significantly in their conceptualization and measurement of parental involvement (Catsambis, 2001). In his comprehensive analysis of the

existing literature concerning what constitutes "parental involvement", Epstein (1992) "recognizes six different types of involvement: (1) parent practices that establish a positive learning environment at home, (2) parent-school communications about school programmes and student progress, (3) parent participation and volunteering at school, (4) parent and school communications regarding learning activities at home, (5) parent involvement in school decision making and governance, and (6) parent access to community resources that increase students' learning opportunities" (Cited in Catsambis, 2001, p.152). Since my study compares public and private school students at 'secondary' schooling, one would ask about the extent to which parental involvement is important during such a late stage of childhood (15-18 years old). However, Yunusa (1989) comments, "many people mistakenly think that a parent's role is sharply reduced after a child has reached secondary school. Although teenagers may be quicker to reject parental advice as expressed, there is no doubt parental support and understanding remain just as important as in the early years of education" (p.65). In fact, not only do parents seem to have an effect upon their children's attainment at secondary schooling, but also at university stage. For example, when Brown (2009) studied the factors that predict students' academic achievement 'at university'; he found parental involvement to be one of these factors. This suggests that considering parental involvement as a possible factor that might contribute to an explanation of the students' academic attainment at secondary school is justifiable. Indeed, there are a considerable number of studies that investigated the effect of parental involvement on their children's academic attainment at secondary school level

and revealed positive relationship between these two factors. Some of these studies are discussed below.

Sophia Catsambis (2001) examined the relationship between parental involvement and students' academic attainment in secondary schools using data set derived from a major longitudinal panel study sponsored by the National Center of Education Statistics in the USA. The data set included a representative sample of 13,580 parents and their children. The study outlined the parental involvement indicators that were positively associated with the students' academic attainment. Similar results were reached in Egypt by Sabry (2006). Sabry (2006) administered questionnaire survey to a selective sample of 275 secondary school students (147 males and 128 females) in Alninya in Upper Egypt. Results revealed, according to the perceptions of the surveyed participants, that parental involvement had a strong relationship with students' academic attainment. It was also found that parents' own education is an important predictor of parental involvement.

As stated earlier in this sub-section, parents can be involved with their children's education in different ways (Catsambis, 2001). Accordingly, the concern of some studies was about which type of parental involvement has the strongest relationship with their children's academic attainment. In Cambodia, Nguon (2012) examined the effects of three types of parental involvement on students' academic attainment. Dataset drawn from student questionnaire of 1551 secondary school students (tenth-grade) and their parents were used to investigate the relationship between parental involvement (home-based and school-based) and students' academic attainment. Statistically significant

relationship was found between school-based involvement and students' achievement. However, it was found that home-based involvement is not significantly associated with students' academic attainment. Likewise, in order to synthesize the relationship between parental involvement and students' academic attainment, Fan and Chen (2001) conducted a meta- analysis of 25 empirical studies that had examined the relationship between the said two variables. The findings indicated that parental aspiration and expectation for children's education attainment has the strongest relationship, whereas parental home supervision has the weakest relationship with students' academic attainment. In his meta-analysis study, Jeynes (2011) examined the impact of parental involvement on secondary school students' academic attainment. The researcher used a random sample of 58 quantitative studies. The analysis of the study revealed the following results (Jeynes, 2011, p.70-71):

> Parental involvement has a positive impact on secondary school students' achievement in all measures (subjects) used in the 58 studies.

> The impact of parental involvement on students' achievement is positive across cultures.

> Parental expectations had the greatest impact on students' achievement than other aspects such as having household rules and parental attendance and participation as school functions.

This suggests that although parental involvement can generally affect their children's academic attainment, some aspects of parental involvement appeared to be more influential compared to others. It seems that school-based parental involvement and parental aspiration and expectation for their children's education have the strongest relationship with their children's academic

attainment in comparison with other aspects of parental involvement such as home-based parental involvement.

As discussed in sub-section 3.2.1.1 earlier, in comparing between public and private schools, some researchers identified the positive influence of parental involvement. The Center on Education Policy (2007), for example, carried out a longitudinal study to compare the academic attainment of public and private secondary schools in the USA. It was found that private secondary school students do academically better than their counterparts from public secondary schools. It was suggested that the academic superiority of private school students is attributed to their higher parental involvement in comparison with parents of public school students. In the same way, Milton & Friedman Foundation (2007) carried out a longitudinal study (from 10th grade to 12th) to compare the academic attainment of public and private secondary school students. Also, private school students were found to have scored higher in mathematics than public school students. Public school teachers attributed this result to a lack of involvement on the part of public school students' parents. In the same context of my study namely in Kuwait, there have been indications that the level of parental involvement is low in public schools (Al-rasheedi, 1998; Kuwait Assembly, 2012). However, in Kuwait, no research has been undertaken into the situation in private schools. My study will investigate whether there are differences between public and private schools in this respect and whether, or not, this can explain why private school students academically outperformed public school students at Kuwait University as measured by their final GPA.

I was also interested to know why students academically perform better when their parents exercise high levels of involvement. One possible reason is discussed below.

Recently, research into parental involvement has expanded to examine the associations of parental involvement with student achievement (Fan and Williams, 2010, p.53). In their review of the related literature, Alyssa, et al. (2005) described how parent involvement appeared to be related to students' motivation across a range of studies. Studies of students from the elementary school to secondary school showed a "beneficial relationship between parental involvement and the following motivational constructs: school engagement, intrinsic/extrinsic motivation, perceived competence, perceived control, self-regulation, mastery goal orientation, and motivation to read" (p.99). Alyssa et al. (2005) argued that these motivational constructs are beneficial to students' academic attainment. Also, Fan and Williams (2010) researched the effects of parental involvement on students' motivation in the Unites States of America. The researchers used a database that included information about 15325 secondary school students (10th-grade). The database contained a wide range of data such as the level of parental involvement, student beliefs and opinions regarding academic self-efficacy, motivation and engagement. The analysis showed that parental involvement has a positive impact on students' levels of motivation. One, therefore, might consider it worthwhile to take into consideration the motivation levels of the students of public and private schools and whether, or not, the students' parents played a role in this concern.

Reviewing the parental involvement literature has informed me about what constitutes parental involvement. Parental involvement is not simply how many times parents contact their children's schools. Parental involvement can occur at home where parents can motivate and encourage their children to learn. However, some aspects of parental involvement might be more influential than others, such as school-based parental involvement and parental aspirations and expectations for their children's education. I will investigate if there are differences in the parental involvement between public and private schools in Kuwait and will consider whether these differences may contribute to an explanation of why private school students outperform their publicly educated peers in Kuwait University.

3.3.8 Summary and Conclusion

The first section of this chapter began with reviewing public versus private school literature in which the academic attainment of the students of these two systems was compared. As stated in sub-section 3.2.3, I drew the conclusion that the differences in the academic attainment between public and private school students is still a controversial issue, at university level at least. The reason for my conclusion is that the relevant studies, which were carried out in different contexts, reported conflicting results in relation to which academically perform higher at university; public or private school students. My study will contribute to knowledge in terms of whether private school students academically outperform private school students at university in the Kuwaiti context.

Based on the literature review, in comparing the academic attainment of publicly and privately educated students at university, I chose to use the parameter of the students' university final GPA (see sub-section 3.2.3 for justification of this choice). Hence, my first research question was articulated as follows:

"Is there a statistically significant difference in the academic attainment of publicly and privately educated students at the University of Kuwait in terms of their GPA at the end of their degree programme?"

As will be discussed in the next chapter, the analysis of Kuwait University's dataset provided evidence of statistical differences between privately and publicly educated students, in terms of their final GPA, in favour of private school students. Since the statistical investigation I had conducted could not explain the reasons for the statistical differences in the academic attainment between the students of the said two systems, I identified a further research question:

"Why do privately educated students academically outperform publicly educated students at Kuwait University in terms of their GPA at the end of their degree programme?"

Some of the related literature suggested the socioeconomic status of the private school students' families as a factor to which this academic superiority is attributed and not to the schooling system itself (e.g. Cox & Jimenez, 1990; Miller & Moore, 1991; Sackett et al., 2009) whereas others suggested that private school students academically outperform their counterparts from public schools even if the socioeconomic status of the students' parents is controlled for (Coleman et al 1982; Kingdon, 1996; Marks et al., 2001; Dronkers & Robert,

2003; Milton & Friedman Foundation, 2007; Paul et al., 2009). In the context of my study, attributing the superiority of private school students to the socioeconomic level of these students' families is not likely to be found in the state of Kuwait due to the reasons outlined in sub-section 3.2.3. On the contrary, I believed that the explanation lies with the nature of the secondary schools these students attended.

As discussed in the first section of this chapter, some of the public versus private studies that compared the students of the said two systems 'at university' level suggested that private school students outperformed public school students because private schools 'prepared their students for university' better than public ones (e.g. Jackson, 1981; Murnane, 1981; Bodenhausen, 1989; Martha, 2009; Paton, 2013). None of these studies, however, which suggested that private schools prepared their students for university better than public schools defined what they meant by 'preparation for university'. Other studies suggested that private school students outperform their counterparts from public schools because private schools are more effective in some of their processes than public schools (e.g. Coleman et al., 1982; OECD, 2000; Dronkers & Robert, 2003; Milton & Friedman Foundation, 2007; Muhammad, 2008). These studies directed my attention to the literature of school effectiveness. Thus, I engaged with literature of school effectiveness in the second section of this chapter to explore the school factors associated with students' academic attainment.

In the second section, I presented definitions of school effectiveness and I also defined what school effectiveness means in the context of my study (see sub-

section 3.3.1). I additionally discussed the historical growth of school effectiveness literature and presented lists of school effectiveness characteristics. I noticed that none of these lists included reference to the extent to which schools prepared their students for higher education as a characteristic of effective schooling. Indeed, it clearly appeared that "preparation for higher education" has not been a feature of such lists. As stated earlier, "preparation for higher education" had been identified as a possibly influential factor by some researchers who had examined the academic attainment of public and private school students at university. Since none of these studies explained what they meant by 'preparation for university', I therefore decided to explore this factor in my own study. The students' interviews (see Chapter 5) enabled me to define what constitutes 'preparing students for university'. Using a questionnaire survey and interviews with school principals, I then examined the extent to which, public and private schools appeared to have prepared their students for university.

As an individual researcher with limited time and resources, I had to be selective when identifying the characteristics of effective schools which I would explore in my study. Also, choosing too many characteristics to investigate carried the danger of sacrificing a deep understanding of the phenomenon for superficial insights across a wide range of issues. Accordingly, I chose and justified my choice of three key school effectiveness characteristics (see sub-section 3.3.4). These three characteristics were (1) leadership effectiveness, (2) teacher effectiveness and (3) parental involvement. I, then, engaged with literature on the leadership effectiveness, teacher effectiveness and parental involvement.

My review of the school leadership effectiveness literature has indicated that, although there seemed to be a growing interest in distributed leadership, no one style of leadership has been found in all effective schools. There are, however, certain areas related to effective leaders that appeared to be important: principals' core functions, principals' leadership styles and the degree of autonomy they have in leading and managing their school. In terms of teacher effectiveness, there has been evidence that effective teachers enhance their students' academic attainment. Reviewing the literature of teacher effectiveness informed me about the factors that had to be taken into consideration when comparing public and private schools such as the characteristics and competencies of effective teachers, teachers' experience, teachers' in-service training, and teachers' pay as well as strategies of assessment and feedback. As for the chosen third characteristic namely parental involvement, the related studies indicated that parents can play an important role in relation to their children's academic attainment. Also, reviewing the literature relating to parental involvement informed me of what constitutes 'parental involvement'

My review of the literature relating to these three characteristics also provided useful insights for designing the methodology of my own study. The majority of school effectiveness studies had employed quantitative research tools. For example, Scheerens and Bosker (1997), Grift and Houtveen (1999), James, et al. (1996), Sijde (1989), Zhan (2006), Sabanci (2008), and Onderi & Croll (2008) are all purely quantitative studies. There were far fewer studies which had utilized a mixed method approach, though it could be argued that studies combining quantitative and qualitative research tools were more effective in providing more comprehensive insights into the reasons why some schools

were more effective than others. According to Klassen et al (2008), very few inquiries into school effectiveness have strayed beyond quantitative research, while "alternative research paradigms, like qualitative and mixed methods approaches, are needed to extend and deepen understanding of the construct" (p.1992).

I have come to believe that quantitative designs are weak in exploring the role of school effectiveness characteristics as they are not able to gather the type of data that are necessary for a better understanding of the phenomenon. Some previous studies were, to some extent, able to advise us about the causality of relationships, but they could not draw a clear picture of the nature of these relationships (e.g. Mercy, 1996; Greenwald et al., 1996; Hanushek et al., 1998; Jepsen, 2005; and Aaronson et al., 2007; Onderi & Croll, 2008). However, this is not to say that qualitative designs alone can identify what type of school is more effective either. Qualitative research is helpful when the aim of a study is to explore peoples' perceptions of a given phenomenon, in this case "school effectiveness". In general, the studies that used mixed methods designs were more successful in studying complex phenomenon than those which used either quantitative or qualitative methods only. AL-rasheedi's (1998) mixed methods study, for example, which was also carried out in Kuwait, can be considered as one of those studies which were successful in achieving their aims. Indeed, using quantitative and qualitative research methods enabled AL-rasheedi (1998) to obtain a considerable amount of data by which he was able to deeply and widely address his research questions. Also, using these two types of data AL-rasheedi could triangulate his data and this increased the trustworthiness of his study. In short, since one would need to obtain as much information as possible

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in order to investigate a complex phenomenon such as the one I am studying, one would adopt a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods.

In conclusion, in order to try to explain the academic superiority of private school students at Kuwait University, my study examined four factors. These factors were; (1) leadership effectiveness, (2) teacher effectiveness, (3) parental involvement and (4) the extent to which public and private schools prepared their students for university. It has to be stated again that the first three factors were the result of reviewing school effectiveness literature (Section 2) whereas the fourth factor, 'preparing students for university', was derived from reviewing the 'public versus private' literature (see Section 1).

My second research question: *'Why do privately educated students academically outperform publicly educated students at Kuwait University in terms of their GPA at the end of their degree programme'*, was therefore informed and elaborated upon through my reading of the related literature (Sections 1 & 2). In addition, I posed the following sub-questions:

(1) Is there any difference in the nature of the leadership style of public and private school principals? If there is any, what impact does this have upon the students' academic achievement?

(2) Is there any difference in the quality of teaching between private and public schools? If there is any, to what extent does this impact upon the students' academic achievement?

(3) What is the nature of the relationship between parental involvement in private and public schools and students' academic achievement?

(4) Is there any difference between private and public schools in the extent to which they prepare their students for University? If there is any, what impact does this have upon the students' academic achievement at university?

(5) Are there other factors to which the academic superiority of private school students at Kuwait University can be attributed?

As stated earlier, and before discussing the methodology by which I will address my second research question and sub-questions (Chapter 5), in the next chapter, I present the results of Kuwait University data set analysis, which answered my first research question.

CHAPTER 4: UNIVERSITY ATTAINMENT OF PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY EDUCATED STUDENTS

4.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 1, the commonly held view in Kuwait has been that private school students do better than public school students at Kuwait University (Watfa & Motawaa, 2008) but this had not been empirically tested. At the start of my study I, therefore, posed the following research question:

> *Is there a difference in the academic attainment of publicly and privately educated secondary school students at the University of Kuwait in terms of their GPA at the end of their degree programme?*

This Chapter sets out the methodology, statistical analyses, findings and discussion of the investigation of the Kuwait University's database by which this first research question was answered.

4.2 Methodology

This element of my research utilised quantitative methodology. Since the independent variable of the study, which is the school system, is pre-existing, Ex Post Facto was used as a methodology in this study. This methodology is sometimes called 'causal comparative' as its purpose is to investigate cause-and-effect relationships between independent and dependent variables (Ary, 2009).

The ex-post-facto research design assumes that a given situation or variable is affected by factors that are related to the effect and explores the relationship

between the variables to determine which factor will be able to explain the observed effect. Moreover, the causes may have occurred in the distant past and are worthy of exploration. However, there may or may not be any relationships at all; it is up to the researcher to develop an alternative hypothesis to explain the observed effects (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

4.3 Population and Sample of the Study

The population used in this study was all the graduates from all universities in Kuwait in the years 2008, 2009 and 2010. From this population the sample was chosen. The method by which Kuwait University was chosen is called captive sampling (Krathwohl, 1997), as there are six private universities in the state of Kuwait (See Chapter 2). However, the University of Kuwait represents the main body of higher education and admits about 35% of students who pursue higher education in Kuwait (Ministry of Education, 2009). As mentioned in Chapter 2, since Kuwait University requires applicants to achieve at least 80% or above at secondary school's certificate, it can be said that only higher achievers from public and private schools can gain entry to it. Students with less than 80% usually choose to attend either PAAET (vocational education) or private universities.

4.4 Gaining Access to the Kuwait University Database

After obtaining the permission to conduct the investigation of the university's database from Kuwait University officials (Appendix B), the researcher met with the Dean of University Admissions to collect the data from the Student Database. The database contained information about the university graduates in the year 2008, 2009 and 2010 - a total of 8740 male and female graduates. The

database also contained information about students' gender, nationality, the type of school they attended and their final GPA. However, no personal information such as names, students' university numbers or their contact numbers was included in the database I was provided with.

4.5 Research Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were tested in this piece of research. The aim of the first was to reveal the students' distribution in Kuwait University's colleges. This test was undertaken for two reasons: (a) to investigate the distribution of public and private school students across Kuwait University's colleges; (b) using this data, to identify a college where both public and private school students were available in reasonable numbers, for the purposes of the student interviews to be carried out in Part 2 of the study (see Chapter 5).

Directly related to my first research question, the aim of the second hypothesis was to establish if there were a statistically significant difference in the attainment of students from public and private school. The students' attainment was measured using students' final GPA. The test considered the final GPA of the students graduated in 2008, 2009 and 2010. Since using the final GPA includes only the students who actually graduated, it was expected that the number of the students included in the statistical test would be slightly fewer than their actual number because some students had either dropped out university or for some reason had not graduated yet. In other words, the university data set included information about 8740 students although the number of students who could graduate and hence processed was 8619. The two research hypotheses are presented as follows:

H1: There are statistical significant differences between private and public school students' distribution in Kuwait University colleges.

H0: There are no statistical significant differences between private and public school students' distribution in Kuwait University colleges.

H2: Students who graduated from private secondary schools have higher university GPA than students who graduated from public schools.

HO2: There is no statistically significant difference in university GPA between public and private school graduates.

4.6 Statistical Analysis

In analyzing the university database, descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were utilised. Descriptive statistics was used to determine the sample characteristics such as gender, private school types and students' distribution in Kuwait University's colleges. Inferential statistical tests were used to determine whether statistically significant differences existed between public and private school students in terms of their distribution in Kuwait University's colleges and the students' academic attainment (GPA). Symmetric measure test was carried out to reveal the students' distribution in Kuwait University's colleges. Independent samples' t-test was used to compare the means and the standard deviations of the said two groups in their final GPA (Pallant, 2007). The latter statistical tests were conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences SPSS (version 17).

4.6.1 Sample Characteristics:

Gender

Table (4.1) shows the percentages of females and males in Kuwait University who had been admitted in the years 2004, 2005 and 2006.

Table (4.1) Percentages of the students according to gender

Gender	Percentage (n= 8740)
Male	28.0
Female	72.0
Total	100.0

In Kuwait, although females form 51% of the population, they make up 72% (6295 females) of the students in Kuwait University while males form only 28% (2445 males) of the students. According to the Deanship of Admission and Registration of Kuwait University, the larger percentage of females' numbers might be attributed to two reasons (AlQabas, 29 March 2009, P.7). Firstly, since Kuwait University requires quite high an overall mark of at least 80% for new admissions, it seems that female students are more likely to reach this standard than males; secondly, due to cultural reasons, males can choose to study overseas quite freely while there are some cultural restrictions when it comes to females, who mostly have to be accompanied by one of their male relatives. Also, the dropout rates among males at all levels of education are higher than that of females because some males, at secondary school ages, prefer to join the police force or the army (Kuwait Assembly, 2012).

Public school & private school

Table (4.2) shows the percentages of public and private school students in Kuwait University according to school type. Most of Kuwait University's students attended public secondary schools. This can be attributed to the fact that most Kuwaiti citizens still choose to send their children to public schools (Kuwait Assembly, 2012). However, there is evidence that the percentage of public school students is likely to decrease by the end of this decade, as more parents have started to choose private schools for their child's secondary education (Kuwait Assembly, 2012).

Table (4.2) Percentages of the students in Kuwait University
according to school type

School Type	Percentage
Public Schools	93.0
Private Schools	7.0
Total	100.0

Private school type

Private school students can be divided into four groups; Arabic schools, British schools, American schools and others (such as Indian and Pakistani schools). Table 4.3 shows their percentages out of all university students. Clearly, the greater portion of private school students in Kuwait University graduated from British private schools followed by Arabic private schools.

Table (4.3) Percentages of the students according to private school type.

Private School Type		Per cent out of all university students
Valid	Arabic schools	1.7
	British schools	2.1
	American schools	0.9
	Others	2.3
	Total	7.0

4.6.2 Findings

✦ **First null hypothesis:** *There are no statistical significant differences between private and public school students' distribution in Kuwait University colleges.* In testing this hypothesis, the researcher used statistical symmetric measures. Table 4.4 shows the relevant results:

Table (4.4) Symmetric Measures results revealing the students' distribution in Kuwait University's colleges.

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.520	.000
	Cramer's V	.233	.000
	Contingency Coefficient	.462	.000
N of Valid Cases		8619	

The results of the directional measures test indicated that there are statistically significant differences (p<.05) of the students' distribution in Kuwait University's colleges. Also, descriptive statistics showed that private school students appear to prefer some colleges in particular; Figure 4.1 shows the relevant information. Of 12 colleges of Kuwait University, three colleges seem to be preferred by private school students; College of Science, College of Engineering and College of Business and Administration. There was only one private school student in each of the College of Law and the College of Health Care.

It is worth stating that colleges at Kuwait University have different capacity in terms of student numbers. Since there is no discrimination policy between public and private school students, this could explain why greater proportions of private school students attend College of Science, College of Engineering and College of Business and Administration. By this I mean, private school students

in these three colleges might have achieved higher percentages in their secondary school certificate compared to public school students.

Figure (4.1) The Distribution of Private School Students in Kuwait University's Colleges.

Private School students

- Center of Health Sciences 15%
- College of Social Studies 1%
- College of Dentistry 2%
- College of Bussiness and Administration 18%
- College of Islamic Studies 2%
- College of Education 3%
- College of Health Care 0%
- College of Engineering 23%
- College of Medicin 3%
- College of Science 22%
- College of Art 11%
- College of Law **0%**
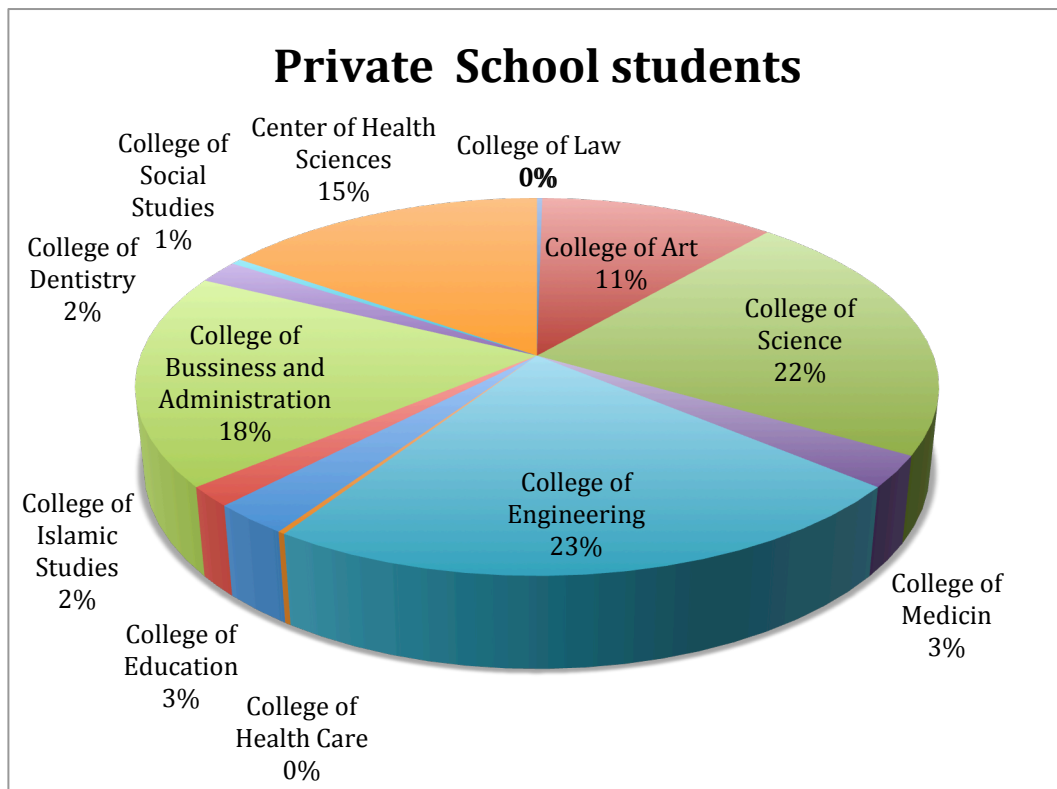
Like their counterparts, public school students seem to have preferred College of Science and College of Engineering (see Figure 4.2). Unlike private school students, a large number of public school students chose to study in College of Education in which there were only 11 private school students. The College of Law and the College of Dentistry were found to have had the lowest numbers of the students of both educational systems.

Figure (4.2) The Distribution of Public School Students in Kuwait
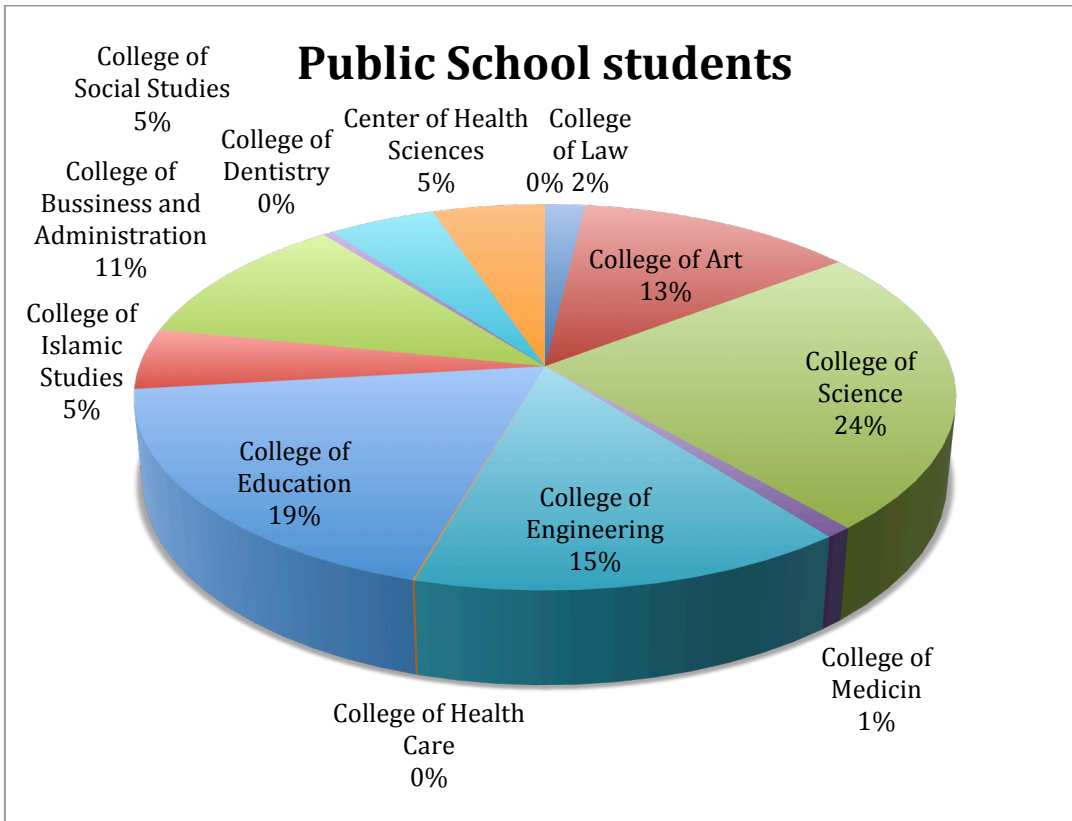
University's Colleges

Second-null hypothesis: There is no statistically significant difference in university GPA between public and private school graduates. In testing this hypothesis, the researcher used Independent Sample t-test. Table 4.5 shows the relevant results:

Table (4.5) Independent Sample t-test results revealing the impact

of education system on the students' academic achievement.

Education system	N	GPA "Mean"	Standard deviation	T	Sig.
Private schools	573	2.868	0.72	12.11	0.00
Public schools	8046	2.492	0.66		

It is evident from Table 4.5 that t-test indicates statistically significant differences (p<.05) between the students' academic achievement "GPA" due to schooling system in favour of private schools. Therefore, the null hypothesis, H02, is rejected for the sample as the mean of private school students is significantly higher than the mean of public school students. This means, private school students outperform their counterparts from public schools.

The overall average rate of students of private schools is (2.868) on the scale of four points which equals (77.36%), while the average overall rate of public school students was (2.492) and this equals (69.84%). Therefore, using GPA as an indicator of educational achievement, it appears that private schools may prepare their students more effectively than public schools for academic success at university, as measured by the students' final GPA.

5.7 Conclusion

The investigation of the Kuwait University database provided empirical confirmation private school students academically outperform their counterparts from public schools in their final GPA at Kuwait University. However, these statistical analyses could not provide the reasons for this disparity. Consequently, I posed my second research question:

Why do privately educated students outperform publicly educated students at Kuwait University in terms of their GPA at the end of their degree programme?

This triggered Part 2 of my study. In the next chapter, I discuss the methodology by which I endeavoured to answer this question.

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4, which represented Part 1 of my study, established that there was a statistically significant difference in the academic attainment of publicly and privately educated students at the University of Kuwait in terms of their GPA at the end of their degree programme across the cohorts I investigated. This chapter presents an explanation of, and rationale for the research design of Part 2 of my study – the investigation of why private school students academically outperform public school students at Kuwait University in term of their final GPA. The sampling procedures, research tools, data collection and data analyses processes are described and discussed. Consideration is also given to the ethical issues encountered in this study. First of all, I discuss my own philosophical viewpoint and how it shaped the design of my study.

5.2 The Researcher's Worldview

"It has been said that everyone is born either an Aristotelian or a Platonist" (Donatella& Keating, 2008, p.34). Indeed, it seems that I was born with a natural tendency to be an Aristotelian, namely realist. I had strongly believed that research should not be undertaken unless the researcher's epistemology is objective. The reason of my latter belief is very simple; I had been one of those who believe in the existence of one reality, which exists "out there" (Guba, 1990). In short, I had believed that a researcher should be objectivist, using scientific methods combined with statistical analysis to reach one single reality (Crotty, 2002). Indeed, I had always liked predictability and generalisability and I had already been familiar with statistical analyses in research. This position

influenced the nature of my first research question (Part 1), which was purely quantitative:

"Is there a difference in the academic attainment of publicly and privately educated students at the University of Kuwait in terms of their GPA at the end of their degree programme?"

As discussed in Chapter 4, I found an answer to my first research question, which was that private school students outperformed public school students at Kuwait University in terms of their final GPA. Yet, the statistical analysis did not shed any light on the reasons for the academic superiority of private schools students. Therefore, I posed another research question (Part 2): "Why do privately educated students academically outperform publicly educated students at Kuwait University in terms of their GPA at the end of their degree programme?" Thus, I started reading and thinking about my "why" question and the methods I should use to answer it.

Having engaged with relevant readings, I realized that a great part of human behaviour could not be probed objectively. For example, it is impossible to attempt to understand others' cultures by digitizing their cultural components. Likewise, it is impossible to gain a deep understanding of reality without exploring the way other people perceive it, as it is unlikely that we perceive the reality in the same way. Using a positivist method such as the questionnaire would allow me to statistically test research hypotheses according to existing theory. However, being content only with testing research hypotheses would merely mean that I sacrificed the "depth" for the "width" in relation to understanding a complex social phenomenon (Creswell & Clark, 2011). In other words, since I had theory in mind

that private schools are academically better than public school students at Kuwait University, I could statistically test the possible reasons that stand behind this theory. However, the philosophy that underpins testing hypotheses is that there is only a singular reality (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Creswell & Clark, 2011). Yet, and due to my further readings, two questions occurred to me; would it not be too simplistic to assume that there is only a singular reality namely the physical world? What if both singular and multiple realities exist? I have to acknowledge that these questions are too abstract to be answered within the confines of this thesis and the research project underpinning it and I by no means can claim to have an answer to either of them. Indeed, none of the social scientists alleged to possess the truth in relation to address such metaphysical questions (Badley, 2003; Creswell & Clark, 2011).

However, these two metaphysical questions made me think that it would be appropriate to move away from a rigid adherence to an objectivistic epistemology and quantitative methods since my aim was to develop a deep understanding of why private school students outperformed public school students at Kuwait University rather than predicting or controlling this phenomenon. As a consequence, I decided to adopt a pragmatic approach to methodology. Rather than choosing between research tools considered by many in the past to be paradigmatically incompatible, pragmatism focuses on "what works" to answer the research questions (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000; Badley, 2003; Burke Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Ary, et al, 2008).

Of course, this not to say that pragmatism possessed the truth in relation to the abovementioned metaphysical questions. Rather, pragmatism emphasises the

notion of practicability as epistemology and assumes that the singular and multiple realties exist as ontology (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Creswell & Clark, 2011).

Although pragmatism in research appeared to me to be a tradition rather than a philosophy, I believed that it is far safer to adhere to the ontological assumptions of pragmatism, which assumes that there are singular and multiple realties (Creswell & Clark, 2011) than assuming that only one of them exists. As for the epistemology, I have adopted pragmatism since it appeared to be the best available framework for mixed-methods (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Creswell & Clark, 2011) by which I can gain wider and deeper understanding as to why privately educated students academically outperformed privately educated students at Kuwait University than being content with utilizing either quantitative or qualitative methods. Indeed, according to Teddlie and Reynolds (2000, p.48) "there is now much evidence that it is precisely the interactions between scientific and the humanistic [pragmatism], between effectiveness and improvement, that is generating scientific 'cutting edge' advances".

As a reflection on my experience in terms of research paradigms, I say it is about time researchers conducted studies for "what works". Indeed, no matter what the paradigm is, I believe that the end of research should be either to find answers to questions or to provide practitioners and stakeholders with solutions to problems. In other words, I adopt the philosophy that says, "the end justifies the means", provided that the means is ethically chosen and conducted.

5.3 Rationale for the Research Methodology

Amongst other researchers working in the same area as my own study, there is also support for a pragmatic approach to methodology. According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998), a useful development in the field of school effectiveness research is the combined use of quantitative and qualitative methods. This approach has been widely practised in school effectiveness research. On the other hand, most of the research comparing academic attainment of public and private school students has been quantitative in nature. Yet, quantitative research is believed by some methodologists to produce too abstract knowledge and this type of knowledge might be unhelpful in understanding complex social phenomena such as the one I was studying (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Therefore, it seemed to me that a different approach was necessary to understand why private school students perform better compared to public school students. Moreover, the mixed methods approach was chosen for this study because it seemed to be the best approach to investigate the relationship between university academic attainment and previous educational experience since I could combine both qualitative and quantitative methods in a way that utilizes the strengths of each within a single study (Guba, 1990; Burke Johnson& Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Using qualitative methods functioned as a means to inductively study different views (multiple realities) relating to my research questions (Creswell & Clark, 2011). In this research, and consistent with my research questions, the qualitative research tools adopted were: face-to-face interviews with students to explore their perceptions of their secondary school across a range of issues identified as characteristics of effective schools and also in relation to how well they believed

their school had prepared them for university; and face-to-face interviews with public and private school principals to explore whether differences could be identified between the public and private schools which might explain the differences in students' attainment at the University of Kuwait.

The aim of quantitative research, which in general assumes that there is one single reality, is to be able to deductively determine relationships, establish causality and test hypotheses (Denzin &Lincoln, 2000). The quantitative research tool I employed in this part of my study was a questionnaire by which I explored Kuwait university students' perceptions about their schools and the extent to which they believed their school had prepared them academically for university.

In addition to increasing the credibility of research findings (Ary, et al, 2008), there were additional reasons for using a combination of methods in this study. The university student face-to-face interviews were used as a strategy called "Instrument development"(Creswell, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). According to Bryman (2006), instrument development "refers to contexts in which qualitative research is employed to develop questionnaire and scale items – for example, so that better wording or more comprehensive closed answers can be generated" (p.106). Indeed, the university students' interviews formed the main base on which the university student questionnaire and the principal interview schedule were constructed. It was necessary to explore the students' perceptions about their secondary schooling since there was very little related literature on this in the Kuwaiti context.

Additionally, the mixed methods approach made it possible to triangulate the data of the main two research instruments. This study sought convergence and

corroboration of the findings across the university student questionnaires and public and private school principals' interviews (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

The mixed methods approach, however, is not without its critics. Bryman (2006), following his content analysis of 232 journal articles, argues that this approach has not been sufficiently articulated in the methodological literature, which results in a lack of certainty about its uses. Another criticism is that the mixed methods approach could provide conflicting data and the analysis of which would focus more on figuring out the source of the conflict rather than on the testing of theories or the building of new knowledge (Burke Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Such criticisms, however, are expected since using mixed-methods is a relatively a new approach, still building its foundations and, indeed, it seems that there is still a considerable amount of work that has to be undertaken in terms of its philosophical position (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

To me, it seemed that the key challenge of a mixed methods approach is that for it to be effectively implemented the researcher should possess equal skill sets in using both qualitative and quantitative research tools (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Indeed, and as implied latter in this chapter, I had difficulty dealing with qualitative methods as well as qualitative data. Further, it was rather a time consuming process for me as a single researcher to carry out both qualitative and quantitative research at a time. Nevertheless, I by no means deny that the mixed methods approach possesses more advantages than disadvantages.

5.4 Research Design

In relation to the context of my study, and before introducing my research design, I should first explain how I designed my mixed methods study. According to the mixed methods research literature (Bryman, 2006; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006; Ary, et al, 2008; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010), five questions had to be answered in order to make a decision in terms of what mixed methods design would be convenient for my study, these questions are presented as follows:

1. Would I have to conduct an exploratory method (e.g. interviews or questionnaires) before developing the main research instruments, and if so, what method would be convenient?

2. Would the quantitative and qualitative methods be conducted simultaneously or sequentially, and why?

3. Which would have the priority (dominance) – the quantitative or the qualitative methods?

4. What would be the function of mixing (integration) quantitative and the qualitative methods?

5. At which stage this mixing (integration) would occur; e.g. at data analysis or at data interpretation?

As for the first question, and as stated earlier, this study needed an exploratory method since very little information was available in relation to my research question in the context of Kuwait. Therefore, university fresher's semi-structured interviews were used in order to explore the issues that might be important in explain the difference in attainment of public and private school students at Kuwait University.

In relation to the second question, which is, would the quantitative and qualitative methods be conducted simultaneously or sequentially, I chose to administer them sequentially. Apart from the logistical benefits of this, conducting the methods sequentially made it possible to address emerging issues from each phase of data collection in subsequent phases (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006). Another reason for choosing to carry out the methods sequentially is that some methodologists suggest that one method might marginalize the other if they were administered simultaneously (Bryman, 2006).

Since it was impossible to determine which group - students or principals - would provide more insights as to why private school students academically outperform public school students at Kuwait University, it was initially decided that equal weight should be given to principals' and students' voices. Also, giving equal weight to the principal interview and student questionnaire concurs with my belief in relation to the nature of knowledge (see Section 5.2).

The last question in determining my research design was to determine the function of mixing quantitative and the qualitative methods (Bryman, 2006). The first main function of mixing quantitative and the qualitative methods in this study was to allow for "triangulating" the findings. The second function was to "illustrate" the students' questionnaire findings using the results of the principals' interviews as a strategy often referred to as putting 'meat on the bones' of 'dry' quantitative findings" (Bryman, 2006, p.106; Creswell & Clark, 2011).

Further, and since I chose to conduct my research methods sequentially so that I could address findings from each phase of data collection in subsequent phases, it was determined that the "integration" between these research methods would

be at data interpretation and not at data analysis (Creswell et al., 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). By this I mean, I did not integrate the two main methods at the data analysis process because I needed to analyse the student questionnaires first before conducting the principal interview so that I could make it possible to address the emerging issues from the findings of the student questionnaire in the subsequent method, namely the principal interview.

Having answered the above questions, the design of my research was determined. This is discussed in the next sub-section. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this study comprised two main parts:

Part 1

In Part 1 of this study, the university database was statistically analyzed to determine the difference in the academic attainment of publicly and privately educated students at the University of Kuwait. The aims, methodology and findings of this statistical investigation have been presented in detail in Chapter 4 (the previous chapter).

Part 2 formed the main body of this study and was divided into two phases:

Phase 1: Students' perceptions and experiences of their secondary school

This phase consisted of two stages. The first constituted the exploratory interviews with university students. In the second stage, an investigation of public and private school students' perceptions and experiences of university students of their secondary school was undertaken.

In the first stage of Phase 1, and after obtaining permission to conduct the present study from Kuwait University officials, face-to-face interviews were

conducted with 16 university freshers about their perceptions of their secondary school. I prepared the interview schedule together with an informed consent form. The aim of the student interviews was to explore, drawing on what I had learned in my review of the literature, the possible factors to which the academic superiority of private school students at Kuwait University could be attributed. Stage 1 was crucial, as it was preliminary and informative to the construction of the student questionnaire and the principals' interview schedule. In Stage 2, a questionnaire was administered to university first year undergraduates to examine their perceptions of their schools to determine why private school students academically outperformed their counterparts from public schools at Kuwait University. Undertaking a questionnaire survey enabled me to reach a larger sample than was possible with interviews.

Phase 2: An investigation of the perceptions and experiences of public and private secondary school principals

In Phase 2, and having gained the permission to conduct the principals' interviews from Kuwait Ministry of Education and the principals themselves, interviews with five public and five private school principals were conducted. The aim of the principal interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of why private school students were academically better than those of public schools at Kuwait University. Carrying out the principal "interviews" after the fresher "questionnaire" survey has been justified by mixed methods methodologists. According to Bryman (2006), using follow-up interviews after surveys is the most common data strategy employed by mixed methods researchers. Based on this strategy, the

interviews may function as elaborative on those of surveys (Wellington, 2000; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

The research instruments used in the two phases of this study are discussed in the next section (see Appendix D for copies of the research instruments).

Figure (5.1) An illustration of the Research Design
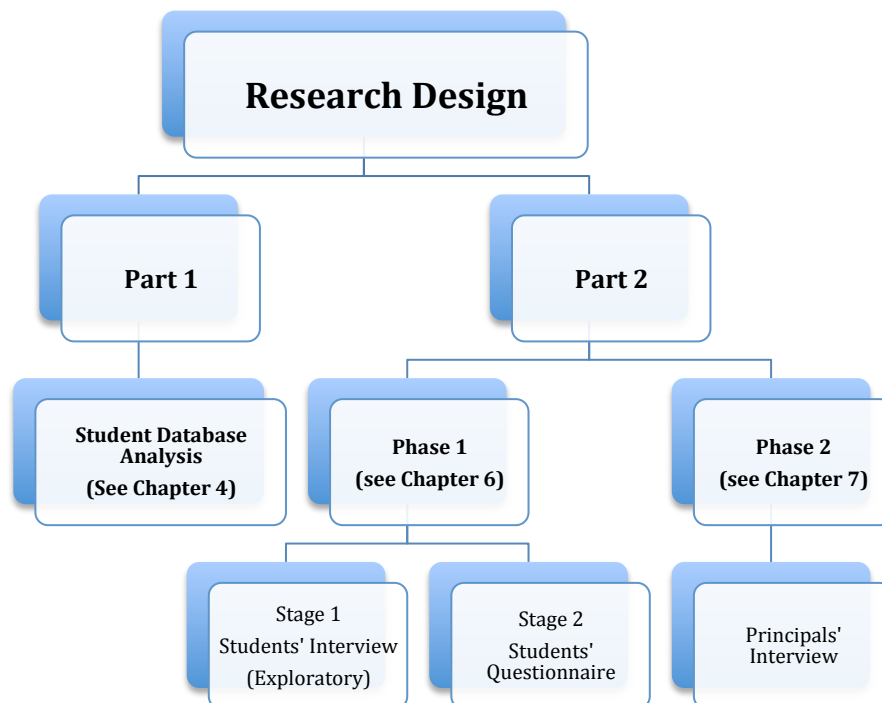
5.5 Research Instruments

5.5.1 Interviews

Interviews, in general, have been widely used in qualitative research because of their particular strengths. Immediate follow-up and clarification are possible. The researcher can adapt the questions as necessary, clarify doubt and ensure that the responses are properly understood, by repeating or rephrasing the

questions. The researcher can also pick up nonverbal cues from the respondent. The presence of the interviewer as such may encourage the interviewee to answer all questions (Denscombe, 1998; Marchal & Roosman, 2006). Interviewing has limitations and weaknesses, however. Interviews are time consuming compared with other research instruments (Ary, et al, 2008). Interviews involve personal interaction, which might cause embarrassment for the interviewer or the interviewee. Interviewees may be unwilling or may be uncomfortable to share their views or experiences about what the interviewer wants to explore. At times, interviewees may have reasons not to be truthful (Marchal & Roosman, 2006). Interviewers may lack the necessary skills to use the research method effectively.

It seemed to me that interviews were appropriate for my own study. First, I believed that I could benefit from the strengths of interviews rather than suffering from its weaknesses since the type of information I needed was not personal in the broad sense of this word which means interviewee embarrassment was not likely to occur. Also, interviewing the university students on an outdoors bench, for instance, in a quiet area in Kuwait University was likely to make them feel relaxed, especially female students who otherwise might be embarrassed by being seen with a male, due to cultural reasons. Secondly, interviews seemed to be a powerful research instrument by which I could extract the type of information I needed to answer my research questions. Further, one-to-one interviews appeared to me to be the easiest qualitative research instruments compared with others such as focus groups (Bryman, 2012). Indeed, I believe that focus group interviews require highly sophisticated skills that I may lack. Besides, and in terms of the students, arranging for male

and female focus groups in the Kuwaiti context was likely to be difficult, due to cultural reasons. As for the principals, it was impossible to ask the principals to leave their work place to participate in a focus group. More importantly, it was unlikely that they would wish to share with other principals their views on the strengths and weaknesses of their school.

Having decided to use the interview as a research tool, I then considered which type of interviews would be appropriate in terms of answering my research questions: structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Klenke, 2008).

Although they are more time consuming than structured interviews, semi-structured interviews were chosen for this study. Unlike structured interviews, through semi-structured interviews, the interviewer can address, clarify and probe complex issues (Klenke, 2008). Moreover, semi-structured interviews allow for greater flexibility than structured ones, and allowed me to follow up on any unforeseen emerging issues.

Unstructured interviews were rejected as a choice for this study as they the interviewees are asked quite different sets of questions and this in turn may result in incomparable data while my study is basically a comparative one (Klenke, 2008). Also, unstructured interviews require more sophisticated interview skills, compared with the other two types, that I might lack.

In planning the interviews, a decision had to be made as to whether the responses of the interviewees should be tape-recorded or not. According to Hart and Blanchard (2006) "tape-recording interviews is more reliable than writing the statements down wherein some information might be lost during

writing. A tape-recording allows [for entering] into a dialogue with [interviewees]. However, some interviewees might develop "stage fright" when they see a tape recorder"(p.247). They might be afraid of making mistakes while the recording would "trap" or embarrass them (Hart and Blanchard, 2006). I decided, however, to tape-record the interviews so long as the interviewee agreed because I had believed that writing the statements might have the same weaknesses of the tape-recording. For example, I had thought that even with writing the statements of the interviews, the interviewees might still be afraid of making mistakes.

In conclusion, interviews were deemed to be more appropriate compared with other qualitative research instruments for the nature of my research questions and my research skills. Also, among the other interview types, the one-on-one semi-structured interviews appeared to be the a best choice for my study since little had been known about the debate on public and private schools in the Kuwaiti context and it also allowed for gaining comparable data. As a consequence, important issues in terms of why private school students academically outperformed their public school counterparts at university were uncovered through the use of semi-structured interviews, which might not have been unveiled otherwise. Indeed, if I were to be asked about the most important advantage of semi-structured interviews, I would say that they allow for the flow of very useful "brainstorms" regarding complex phenomena. Two semi-structured interview schedules were carried out in this study; student interviews and principal interviews.

(a) *Student interviews*

It has to be stated first that a decision had to be made in terms of which to interview: teachers or students, since I could not, due to time and cost, collect data from both of them. As discussed in Chapter 3, although students are the direct stakeholders of teaching, little research has considered their perceptions in terms of effective teaching (Chang, 2011). Therefore, it was my opinion that in order to gain a better understanding of teachers and teaching, I should investigate the students' perceptions of this phenomenon.

As a result, a semi-structured schedule for the one-on-one interview with the 16 university freshers was developed. The interview schedule contained open-ended questions that asked the freshers to describe their perceptions of the schools. The questions posed in this schedule drew on the characteristics of effective schools, identified in my review of that field of literature, as discussed in (Chapter 3 - Section 2). The university student interview schedule addressed four key areas as follows (see Appendix D):

1. School Leadership.
2. Quality of teaching.
3. Parental involvement.
4. Preparation for University.

The interview schedule was piloted with three university students whom I stopped and asked to participate. According to Bell (1993, p.84) "the purpose of a pilot exercise is to get the bugs out of the instruments so that subjects in your main study will experience no difficulties in completing it and so that you can carry out a preliminary analysis to see whether the wording and format of

questions will present any difficulties when the main data are analyzed". The results of the pilot indicated the ease with which the participants answered the questions and identified the questions that were still vague and needed to be refined (Fowler, 1995). The pilot interviews took an average of 25 minutes, which was deemed by the students to be an acceptable duration. Some linguistic amendments were carried out according to the suggestions and recommendations of those three university students. For example, "feedback", "formative", "summative" and "ethos" appeared to be unfamiliar terms according to the three students and were replaced by phrases rather than words to ensure that there was a common understanding of terms. Also, it appeared that the students' confused 'ethos' with 'management' and amendments were made accordingly. Since the purpose of piloting the students' interview with three students was merely to see whether the wording, format and duration were appropriate, none of these three interviews was processed in the data analysis.

(b) Principal interviews

Drawing on the issues emerging from my analysis of student interview and questionnaire data and on the issues which had emerged from my review of the literature related to effective schools and previous comparisons of public and private schools, I developed a separate semi-structured schedule for one-on-one interviews with five public and five private school principals. This interview schedule also contained open-ended questions. The key aim of the interviews was to investigate whether there were differences between private and public schools across a range of areas and, if so, whether these might be a factor in explaining the academic superiority of private school students at Kuwait

University in terms of their final GPA). The interviews therefore investigated the principals' experiences and perceptions of their schools in relation to the following issues (see Appendix D for a copy of the interview schedule):

1. The school's leadership and management structures and systems.

2. The characteristics of the teaching staff.

3. The quality of teaching.

4. Assessment, feedback and monitoring

5. Parental involvement.

6. Preparation for university.

The school principal interview protocol was piloted with two public secondary school principals, who used to be my colleagues. These two public school principals were chosen for piloting because I have personal relationships with them as a public school teacher and hence no formal procedures were required to conduct these pilot interviews. Also, I considered these two principals would be comfortable in criticizing the interview schedule. Although the results of piloting indicated the ease with which the participants understood and answered the questions, they also suggested some linguistic changes. Their comments were to some extent similar to those of the three university students especially in terms of "formative feedback" and "ethos". Their suggestions were taken into consideration to improve the interview schedule. As for the duration of the principal interview schedule, it was found to take an average of 45-50 minutes. Since the purpose of piloting the principals' interview was only to determine the appropriateness of it in terms of wording, format and duration, neither of these two interviews was processed in the data analysis.

5.5.1.1 Credibility and trustworthiness of university freshers and school principals' interviews

In qualitative research, *credibility* depends mainly on instrument construction and the quality of information gained by using it (Golafshani, 2003). *Trustworthiness*, on the other hand, depends on the degree to which the instrument and the results generated by it are reliable (Hammersley, 2007).

In order to enhance the credibility of the student and principal interview schedules, a number of strategies were adhered to. The open-ended questions of both the students and principal interview schedules were submitted to a panel of experts to establish the face validity (credibility) of the instruments (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The questions were also piloted and the responses and suggestions of the students and principals were taken into consideration to improve the interview schedules.

In order to enhance the trustworthiness of this study, many direct quotations of what the participants said have been used in the findings chapters, in order to convey an understanding of the study's context. This strategy also "helps readers experience the participants' world" (Ary, et al, 2008, p.500). Further, I explain the operational details of how the interview data were gathered, as well as how the research was conducted in the field (Shenton, 2004).

Additional strategies were adhered to, to maximize the credibility and trustworthiness of the interview data. According to Patton (2001, p. 247) "triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods. This can mean using several kinds of methods or data, including using both quantitative and

qualitative approaches". Thus, the first strategy was triangulating the findings that had been generated by different research instruments and this was achieved mainly in the university student questionnaire and the principal interviews, since those of university freshers had been considered as preliminary and exploratory. The second strategy was considering my supervisors' interpretations of my data to see whether they agreed with my interpretations (Johnson, 1997).

According to Ary et al. (2008, p.501) "researcher bias is a source of invalidity in qualitative studies". Therefore, this study randomly selected the interviewees from the list of registered school principals in the State of Kuwait, and therefore provided a random sample of participants that controls for the possible effect of selection bias (Krathwohl, 1997). Furthermore, the equal number of private and public school students and principals also ensured that there are an equal number of sources of information, which strengthened the credibility of the findings of the present study (Krathwohl, 1997).

It is worth stating, however, that the sample for the university student interview was an opportunity sample, which means it was not a random sample. Nevertheless, this should not have affected the credibility and trustworthiness of the study as the student interviews had been considered as exploratory and informative for the construction of the student questionnaire and the principal interview. Also, and to minimize the effects of possible bias, equal numbers of public and private school participants were utilized for the student interviews.

5.5.2 Questionnaire survey of university freshers

The questionnaire as a research instrument has been widely used in mixed methods research (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, Bryman 2006). However, questionnaires have weaknesses and limitations. They are of little value for examining complex social relationships in which considerable amount of information is needed (Denscombe, 1998). This limitation has been addressed in this study by complementing this quantitative research tool with qualitative methods by which a considerable amount of data was gathered.

In the context of school effectiveness research, one weakness associated with questionnaire surveys is that the questions posed tend to draw on pre-existing knowledge of the phenomenon, allowing less possibility for the discovery of new or unknown traits and dispositions (Daniel, 2006, p.59). However, this weakness is to some extent not applicable to my own study since I deliberately undertook student interviews first in order to use the findings from those to inform the content and construction of the student questionnaire.

The questionnaire was used in this study because of its undeniable advantages. The strengths of questionnaires include their accuracy and convenience. "Accuracy in measurements is enhanced by quantification, replicability, and control over observer effects" (Marchal & Roosman, 2006, p. 126). Questionnaires are amenable to rapid statistical analysis and are comparatively easy to conduct (Marchal & Roosman, 2006).

The questionnaire was deemed to be a convenient choice for this study since it gave access to a much larger sample than could be achieved with the student interviews. The questionnaire data could then be considered alongside the data

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from principals in building up the picture of the differences between public and private schools (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

The university student questionnaire addressed five key areas (see Appendix D):

1. School Leadership.

2. Teachers and the quality of teaching.

3. Assessment, feedback and monitoring

4. Parental involvement.

5. Preparation for university.

The questionnaire participants were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement to a range of statements relating to these five areas, using a 4-point scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' (Krathwohl, 1997).

Drawing on the issues emerging from the review of the two main bodies of literature discussed in Chapter 3: (a) the literature comparing student attainment in relation to public and private schools and (b) the studies investigating the characteristics of effective schools; six alternative hypotheses were identified and tested in order to establish if there were statistically significant differences, according to the perceptions of students, in the extent to which public and private schools prepared them for university, alongside the possible differences in the factors that might be responsible for the differences in preparation for university. These hypotheses are presented below.

Hypotheses:

H1: There is a statistically significant difference in school leadership and ethos in favour of private schools.

HO1: There is no statistically significant difference in school leadership and ethos between public and private schools.

H2: There is a statistically significant difference in teachers and the quality of teaching in favour of private schools.

HO2: There is no statistically significant difference in teachers and the quality of teaching between public and private schools.

H3: There is a statistically significant difference in the assessment, feedback and monitoring in favour of private schools.

HO3: There is no statistically significant difference in the assessment, feedback and monitoring between public and private schools.

H4: There is a statistically significant difference in parental involvement in favour of private school students.

HO4: There is no statistically significant difference in parental involvement between public and private school students.

H5: There are statistically significant differences between private and public schools in the extent to which they prepared their students for university.

H05: There are no statistically significant differences between private and public schools in the extent to which they prepared their students for university.

H6: There are statistically significant correlations between the five components of the questionnaire.

HO6: There are no statistically significant correlations between the five components of the questionnaire.

In order to check that the instructions and statements were clearly stated, the questionnaire was piloted with six university freshers whom I approached and asked to participate. The results indicated the ease with which the participants answered the questionnaire. Nonetheless, one of the six participants regarded the word "inspirational" as quite vague and this word was clarified accordingly and then this clarification was checked and approved by a professor in College of Education – Kuwait University (Fowler, 1995). On average, the freshers were able to fill in the questionnaires in 15 minutes. These six pilot questionnaires were not used in the process of the questionnaire data analysis.

5.5.2.1 Questionnaire Reliability and Validity

Internal reliability of an instrument refers to the degree of the consistency of the instrument's items (Bryman, 2012), while validity refers to the degree to which an instrument is able to measure what it purports to measure (Neuman, 2006). Establishing the validity and reliability of an instrument is important to ensure that the data gathered in the study corresponds to the constructs or variables it aims to measure and examine. Also, a valid and reliable instrument would presuppose that the gathered data is also valid and reliable (Fowler, 1995). The reliability and validity of the questionnaire are discussed below.

The reliability of the questionnaire used in this study was established by measuring the *Internal Consistency Estimates of Reliability* of the questionnaire items (62 items) (Fowler, 1995). This technique is also called Split-half coefficient, which is obtained by calculating the scores for two halves of the questionnaire. "The value of the reliability coefficient is a function of the consistency between the two halves. The greater the consistency in responses among items, the higher Split-half coefficient will be" (Green, & Salkind, 2010, p.327). The Split- half coefficient usually ranges in value between 0 and 1.

In order to conduct Split- half coefficient without any violation, the parts of the measure must be equivalent (Field, 2003). Accordingly, the two parts of the questionnaire were made equivalent which is 31 items each. Another technique was used to ensure the highest level of equivalency, which was to split the questionnaire in odd-numbered items and even-numbered items instead of splitting it into the first 50% of the items and the second 50% of them. The reason for the use of this technique was to avoid the possibility that some respondents may be more fatigue while filling in the second part of the questionnaire compared with the first one (Green, & Salkind, 2010). Using SPSS version 17, the split-half coefficient of the questionnaire items was conducted. Table 5.1 shows the reliability statistics of the questionnaire according to the Split-Half coefficient

Table (5.1) Shows the Reliability Statistics of the questionnaire according to the Split-Half Coefficient

Cronbach's Alpha	Part 1	Value	.854
		N of Items	31[a]
	Part 2	Value	.840
		N of Items	31[b]
	Total N of Items		62
Correlation Between Forms			.849
Spearman-Brown Coefficient	Equal Length		.874
	Unequal Length		.874
Guttman Split-Half Coefficient			.873

a. The items are: odd-numbered items.

b. The items are: even-numbered items.

The Split-half coefficient of the questionnaire equaled (0.873). This result indicates that the questionnaire of this study can be considered as an instrument of a very high reliability. This means, the items of the university student questionnaire were homogenous in relation to the extent to which they examined the concept of school effectiveness and whether, or not, these students had been prepared for university by their schools.

Before discussing the validity of the questionnaire, I should mention that I intentionally ignored the "external reliability" of the questionnaire, which refers to the extent to which the findings of the questionnaire are generalisable (Bryman, 2012). The reason for not discussing the external reliability of the questionnaire is that the aim of this study is to provide insights to a complex social phenomenon and not to generalize findings.

The validity of the questionnaire was established through two steps that were incorporated into the development and construction of the questionnaire (Lewis-Beck, 1995; Fowler, 1995). In order to check the face and content validity of the questionnaire, the questionnaire items were reviewed by a panel of experts that are well versed in item and questionnaire construction. The panel of experts checked for grammar, readability, design and the extent to which it would measure what it was meant to measure (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The researcher included, excluded and amended some of the questionnaire statements according to the advice of the panel of experts. Then, and after translating the questionnaire into Arabic, the questionnaire was approved by a professor at College of Education (Kuwait University) and pilot tested with 6 university students as stated earlier (Fowler, 1995).

Having discussed the research instruments, the sampling methods and data collection procedures of each instrument are presented in details below.

5.6 Research Samples

As indicated earlier, three samples were utilized in Part 2 of this study (see Table 5.2):

Table (5.2) Samples and sample characteristics

Research Instrument	Public schools	Private schools	Total	Nature of the sample
Students' interview	8	8	16	Opportunity
Students' questionnaire	63	139	202	Random cluster-sampling
Principals' interview	5	5	10	Random

5.6.1 Sample of the interviews with Kuwait University freshers

The sample for the semi-structured interviews with Kuwait University students consisted of 16 Kuwait university first year undergraduates who were an opportunity sample. Freshers were chosen as their memories of their school would be fresh, and they would also be currently learning how to adjust to university learning. Also, the reason for using an opportunity sample was that it was very difficult to choose students randomly as I did not have access to a list of Kuwait University students.

The sample of the 16 university freshers were divided into 4 categories according to their gender and the type of school they had attended, as follows:

- ➢ Eight males: of whom four had graduated from public schools and four from private schools.
- ➢ Eight females: of whom four had graduated from public schools and four from private schools.

It has to be acknowledged that the focus of the study was on public versus private school students and not on the role of gender in students' perceptions and experiences. However, using equal numbers of males and females should function as a control for the effect of the gender on the findings.

Since the sample was an opportunity one, I approached passing students in Kuwait University and asked them to participate in the interview after making sure that they were freshers. It should be stated that none of the university freshers refused to participate. In other words, the sample of the 16 university freshers was a result of 16 attempts of asking freshers to participate.

5.6.2 Sample of the questionnaire survey with Kuwait University freshers

In order to control for the possible effect of maturation, university freshers were also chosen as the questionnaire survey sample (Punch, 2003). Freshers who filled in the questionnaire had just come from secondary school and their memories of their school would be fresh, and they would also be currently learning how to adjust to university learning. This is the reason why the fresher students were used as participants in the questionnaire survey for the perceptions of their previous education.

In order to control for the possible effect of selection bias (Krathwohl, 1997), the sample of the university fresher questionnaire was randomly chosen, as follows:

- ➤ Three colleges out of 12 undergraduate colleges in Kuwait University were chosen randomly using a cluster-sampling method, which resulted in choosing; College of Medicine, College of Law and College of Engineering.

- ➤ Afterwards, three English language classes (mandatory for all freshers) were chosen randomly from each of these three colleges using the same sampling method namely a cluster-sampling method.

The sample consisted of 211 students of whom 65 private school graduates and 146 public school graduates. Nine questionnaires, however, were found to be invalid for processing as they were returned incomplete. Two hundred and two questionnaires were analyzed; of these 63 questionnaires were filled in by private school graduates and 139 by public school graduates.

Figure 5.2 shows the numbers of the students who participated in my study according to their specialty at university. The largest proportion of private school students were located in the College of Medicine, while the largest proportion of public schools students had chosen to study Engineering. The College with the lowest number of private school students was Law.

Figure 5.2 shows the university specialty of the participated students in the survey according to their school system.

Figure (1) Speciality at University according to School Type

- ■ Public School Graduate
- ■ Private School Graduate
- ■ Total

	Public School Graduate	Private School Graduate	Total
College of Engineering	54	21	75
Collge of Medicine	18	39	57
College of Law	67	3	70
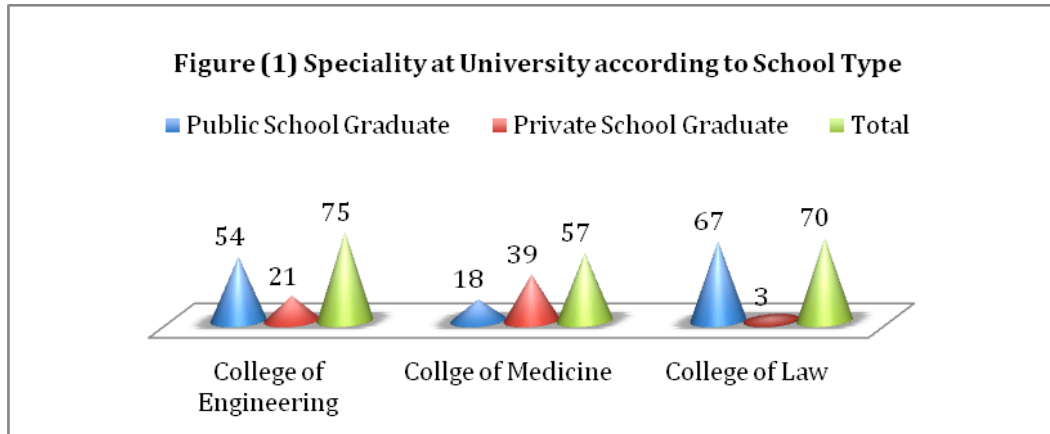
Table 5.3 shows the frequencies and the percentages of the participants according to their gender.

Table (5.3) Frequencies and percentages of the students according to gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	74	37
Female	128	63
Total	202	100.0

The percentage of females participating in the study was much larger than that of males. This reflects the proportion of females/males studying at Kuwait University, as discussed in Chapter 4. However, and as mentioned in Chapter 4, this was not surprising as the superiority of females numbers compared with males in Kuwait University can be attributed to cultural reasons.

5.6.3 Sample of the interviews with public and private school principals

Since selection bias is a possible source of invalidity in qualitative research (Krathwohl, 1997), a total of 10 principals were randomly selected from the list of school principals provided by the Department of Education of the State of Kuwait. In relation to the technique used in selecting the sample, two separated lists of public and private secondary schools were utilised. A digit was randomly chosen (from 1 to 10). Then, and accordingly, one school was selected out of every ten on the two lists.

To ensure that there were an equal number of sources of information across the two types of school, five of principals were from private schools and the other five were from public schools. The gender, length of service and educational qualifications of the sample were asked about in the interview for profiling purposes.

5.7 Data Collection

5.7.1 Interviews with Kuwait University freshers

These interviews were conducted in the College of Science. The College of Science was chosen purposefully as, unlike other colleges, it caters for reasonable numbers of both public and private school students (see Chapter 4).

After I had outlined the main sections of the interview schedule and checked that the interviewees were happy to continue, they were asked to sign the consent form. The interviews were conducted in the morning and afternoon over three days. The location where the interviews were administered was in an outdoors square in the said college. On average, the interview took 20-25

minutes. The location where the interviews were administered was quiet. The tape-recording worked well. Two participants were accompanied by one of their friends. However, their friends did not interfere in the process of interviewing (see Section 5.9: Ethical Consideration). The fresher' interviews were somewhat disappointing, however, in the amount and quality of the information gathered. I was aware that the students had lectures to attend and I therefore kept the interviews fairly short. In addition, the students tended to give only short answers to my questions.

5.7.2 Questionnaire survey of Kuwait University students

The questionnaires were distributed to the sample of students during their English language class since these classes are mandatory for all freshers in the university. Having presented the university's letter of permission to the tutor of each class, I distributed the questionnaire in the presence of the class tutors and if the students were willing to participate in the study, they indicated this by signing the informed consent form (Appendix A). If they declined to participate, they returned the questionnaire to the researcher. The process of the survey was easy and no problems were faced (see Section 5.9: Ethical Consideration).

The collection of the questionnaire data took one week, because the participants were based in three different colleges, located in different areas, and the nine English language classes had different timings.

5.7.3 Interviews with private and public school principals

The identified 10 school principals were contacted by telephone to inform them of the study, to invite them to participate in the present study and upon their agreement, a time for interview was agreed.

The interviews were conducted in the principals' offices, which could be considered a non-threatening venue for them, and before the start of each interview, the participants signed an informed consent form.

All the principals were welcoming to be interviewed. The duration of the interviews ranged approximately from 45 to 60 minutes and they took place in the principal's office. However, occasionally, some interviews were interrupted by a member of school staff for a short while, but this did not affect my ability to fully implement my interview schedule.

5.8 Data analysis

5.8.1 Questionnaire data

In analyzing the questionnaire, descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences SPSS (software programme, v.17). Nine questionnaires (out of 211) were not included in the data analysis as they were incomplete (Neuman, 2006). As a consequence, two hundred and two questionnaires were analyzed.

The questionnaire consisted of five components. Descriptive statistics tests were used to determine the characteristics of the students' sample such as, gender, school type, family income and parents' education. Inferential statistical tests were used to examine six alternative hypotheses (See page 166).

Independent samples' t-tests were conducted for the first five hypotheses to compare the means of two different groups (Green & Salkind, 2010). The first t-test was conducted to see whether differences exist between public and private schools in terms of preparation for university. Then, four tests were used to determine whether there were factors to which the superiority of private school students in terms of academic achievement at Kuwait University can be attributed.

A final test used Pearson's product-moment to examine whether the five components of the questionnaire correlated with each other, alongside the possibility of considering these four components as factors affecting students' preparation for university- the fifth component.

5.8.2 Interview data

The qualitative data from the one-on-one interviews with both the university freshers and school principals were analyzed manually. According to Paton (2002, p.433), "because each qualitative study is unique, the analytical approach will be unique" (Cited in Saldana, 2013, p.59). Indeed, it seems that, although there are general rules in qualitative analysis, one cannot find one single procedure for analyzing one's qualitative data simply because each qualitative study is surrounded by its unique contextual circumstances.

For me, the most important question was whether I should use inductive analysis of the data wherein meaning and critical codes emerge out of the data (Patton, 1990) or whether I should apply theory and/or pre-existing key concepts to the data in order to examine the extent to which that theory/those concepts was/were applicable to my own data (Richards, 2009). Although they

do not seem to undervalue inductive analysis, some qualitative research methodologists appear to recommend starting with theory (e.g. Richards, 2009; Saldana, 2013). According to Richards (2009, p.74), even in situations where the researcher seems theory-free, s/he must carry some theoretical assumptions of the phenomenon under study. I already had an initial view in mind that private school students do academically better than public schools at university in Kuwait. Also, drawing on my review of the literature, before starting my qualitative analysis, I discovered that private schools may be more effective than public schools in terms of the factors; (1) Leadership effectiveness (2) Teacher effectiveness (3) Parental involvement and (4) The extent to which they prepared their students for university (see Chapter 3). Indeed, these had been used to determine the questions I posed in the interviews and in the questionnaire. These four factors, therefore, formed the categories of my analysis under which the generated codes and sub-codes were allocated (see Table 5.6). Having stated my stance in relation to my qualitative data, I describe how I analysed my data below.

The analysis of my qualitative data can be divided into three stages. In the first stage, each of the tape-recorded interviews was fully transcribed. Then I undertook 'purposive reading' for each interview transcript, which aimed to question the data, and to comment on them (Richards, 2009, p. 75). The reason for reading each interview transcript separately was to gain understanding of the general trends in each interviewee's responses as a whole. At this stage, I initially and tentatively coded issues such as words, phrases and sentences that appeared relevant to each other, a process often referred to as "open coding" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The texts coded were about concepts, opinions,

actions, activities etc. (see appendix E). As stated earlier, most of these issues were coded because they had connections with the existing body of the related literature (Bryman, 2012). Of course, this does not mean I strictly adhered to this strategy. Indeed, some of the data contained issues that had not emerged in my review of the literature. Where this occurred, they were coded inductively because they were unpredicted. Table 5.4 shows the unpredicted responses from one interviewee (see appendix E for the full open coding of this interviewee's responses).

Table (5.4) Example of coding unpredicted responses.

Participant's responses (e.g. words or phrases)	Code
I allocate my best teachers in 12th because they should be well prepared for the national examinations	Grade allocation: 12th
... But honestly most families seem to prefer employing a private teacher to do this job. Is it a phenomenon? *Yes it is.* Do you agree with this strategy? *I do it for my own kids... I do not mind it.*	Private tutoring: High dependency
In fact this is the first time I have heard about such feedback	Feedback: no knowledge of formative feedback.
Yes we develop these skills but not especially for university... for life.	Skills acquisition: for life, not university.
... These schools are primarily meant to prepare their students for university	School mission: private schools – entry to university
... Most of them fail starting families or their own business.	Private school students: lack enterprise/entrepreneurial ability

Now, you have to choose whether your son becomes socially smart with the possibility of going to university	Public school students: socially skilled
You can still be a good person as well as a good citizen without university.	Value of university education: questionable.
Yes	Percentage of university applicants: 20% - happy with this.
Punctual	Effective teacher characteristics: punctuality
An effective teacher must be polite and clean	Effective teacher characteristics: polite/clean
The government guarantees good jobs for their children [students] _without significant differences in their salaries._	Parental involvement: Low motivation - Economic security

Once each interview had been read and coded, Microsoft Word files were created for each of the questions posed in the interview schedule. In terms of the principal interviews, this process resulted in generating 50 files. Into each file I cut and pasted each interviewee's response to the question, together with my initial codes attached to it. The process of grouping each question in one document was to facilitate the comparison of the responses of the interviewees. Indeed, since my study was a comparative one, I was looking for similarities and differences in the responses of public and private school participants to determine whether one system was characterized more in terms of the above-mentioned four characteristics. Thus, the data was read many times to see whether, or not, the directions and threads of the data flow into those four characteristics (categories).

In the second stage, collating all the codes that were produced in the first stage, a bank of codes was generated. The bank of codes showed the frequency of

the interviewees' responses (Bryman, 2012). This process was crucial since it made it easier to examine the extent to which my codes related to the issues identified in the literature and the extent to which new issues had emerged. The third stage of the analysis involved re-examination of the codes and sub-codes to determine how they were linked, a complex process sometimes called "axial coding" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). During this process, I also went back to the first interview transcripts to see whether I could merge, add or even drop some codes and sub-codes. Table 5.5 shows examples of merged, added and dropped codes and the reason for taking such actions.

Table (5.5) Example of merged, added and dropped sub/codes

Example	Code before Action	Action	Code After action	Reason(s)
(1) Our primary goal is to prepare them for life. *(2) Yes we develop these skills but not especially for university… for life.*	(1) School mission (2)Skills for university: academic	Merged	School mission	Both responses are about school mission.
You cannot give autonomy to new teachers for instance.	-	Added	Teacher Autonomy	Emphasised by other interviewees.
My best teacher had Smart appearance	Characteristics of effective teacher: Smart appearance	Dropped	-	(1) No clear connection with the existing body of the related literature. (2) Mentioned only by one interviewee out of sixteen.

Consequently, the final codes and sub-codes were assigned under the relevant categories (the four characteristics), which had been derived from the literature review (see Table 5.6). Using Table 5.6, which is the result of the axial coding, I could assemble the "big picture". Indeed, the outcome of the qualitative analysis enabled me to acquire a new understanding of why private school students academically outperformed public school students at Kuwait University. In other words, new knowledge, in terms of why private school students outperformed public school students at Kuwait University, was generated from the perspectives of the participants. This new knowledge is presented in chapters 6 and 7 and interpreted and triangulated in the discussion Chapter (Chapter 8).

Table (5.6) list of codes of principal interview

Literature review (Chapter 3)			
School effectiveness **(Section 2)**			**Public versus private** **(Section 1)**
Leadership effectiveness **(See Sub-section 3.3.5)**	**Teacher effectiveness** **(See Sub-section 3.3.6)**	**Parental involvement** **(See Sub-section 3.3.7)**	**Preparation for university** **(See Section 1)**
Code 1: School Improvement Strategies. *Code 1.1:* school improvement strategies. *Code 1.2:* Current school improvement strategies: **Code 2: Leadership Style.** *Code: 2.1:* Impact of Ministry of Education on leadership style *Code 2.2:* School Mission. *Code 2.3:* Core principal functions/responsibilities. *Code 2.4:* Delegation of powers. *Code 2.5:* Promotion of collaborative working. *Code 2.6:* Teacher involvement in decision-making. *Code 2.7:* Teacher autonomy. *Code 2.8:* Principal-staff relationships *Code2.9:* Relationship with other schools.	**Code 1: Quality of Teaching** *Code 1.1:* Quality of teaching in school. *Code 1.2:* Monitoring quality of teaching *Code 1.3:* Teacher's annual assessment. *Code 1.4:* Student intake. **Code 2: Effective teacher characteristics.** *Code: 2.1:* Personal Characteristics. *Code 2.2:* Pedagogical Characteristics. **Code 3: Other Characteristics** *Code 3.1:* Teacher qualifications. *Code: 3.2:* Teacher experience *Code 3.3:* Teacher in-service training: *3.3.1: Impact of in-service training.* *Code 3.4:* Teacher Pay: *3.4.1 Impact of teacher pay.* **Code 4: Teacher-student relationships.** *Code 4.1:* Formal Relationships. *Code 4.2:* Informal Relationship. **Code 5: Teacher workload.** *Code 5.1:* Appropriate workload. *Code 5.2:* Inappropriate workload.	**Code 1: Parental involvement.** *Code 1.1* Parental Involvement Level. *Code 1.2:* Satisfaction of parents. *Code 1.3:* Importance of Parental Involvement *Code 1.4:* Student motivation and Parental Involvement.	**Code 1: Percentage of university applicants** **Code 2: Information, advice and guidance on university course** **Code 3: Knowledge and skills necessary for success at university** *Code 3.1:* Academic *3.1.1: Knowledge* *3.1.2: Skills* *Code 3.2:* Personal skills *Code 3.3:* Skills acquisition **Code 4: School mission in relation to university entrance** **Code 5: Reason for superiority of private school students** *Code 5.1:* School effect *Code 5.2:* Family effect

	Code 6: Average class size.		
	Code 7: Students' assessment, feedback.		
	Code 7.1: Student assessment types		
	Code 7.2: Student knowledge of assessment types and criteria		
	Code 7.3: Tracking students' progress		
	Code 7.4: Student support		
	Code 7.5: Expectations of students		
	Code 7.6: Expectations of students – discussion with students		

5.9 Ethical Considerations

In this section, I discuss the ethical issues relating to my study.

Research with human participants demands that informed consent be sought and anonymity be maintained (BERA, 2004; Denzin &Lincoln, 2000). A series of procedures were adhered to in order to achieve the highest possible standards of ethical conduct. The Certificate of Ethical Approval was approved and signed by the chair of the Exeter University Ethics committee (see Appendix A). Then, written permission to conduct the interviews with students was obtained from the Dean of Admissions and Registration of Kuwait University (see Appendix B). The university fresher interviewees were asked to complete an informed consent form prior to the interview after I had explained what their participation would involve and given them an overview of the research study (see Appendices A & D). All the interviews were conducted in a public space in Kuwait University. However, the location where the students' interviews were conducted was quiet and the interviewees could not have been overheard by their peers except two female interviewees who were accompanied by their classmates. However, their classmates did not interfere in the process of

interviewing although they could hear what was being talked about. I considered this as ethical since it was the choice of these two interviewees to be accompanied by their classmates. All the interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the interviewees. Since their names were recorded on the interview schedule, the interview records and the transcripts have been protected from disclosure to a third party. Both the electronic and print copy of the data and the interview recordings are stored securely.

The Dean of Admissions and Registration of Kuwait University (see Appendix B) had also given permission for me to undertake the questionnaire survey. The participants of the university student questionnaire were asked to volunteer to participate in the study by reading and signing the informed consent form (See Appendix D). The informed consent form included an overview of the study and its aims and objectives, it also described the kind of participation that the participant was expected to demonstrate in accomplishing the questionnaire. Contact information was provided in the consent form (first page of the survey) so that the participants could contact me if they had any questions or for clarification (BERA, 2004). Although the participants were also given the option to withdraw at any time, none of them did so. This might be due to the fact that they had limited time to make a decision on this concern as they were asked to participate at the beginning of their English Language classes. However, they were able to exercise their right to non-participation by not completing the questionnaire at all or fully. Nine (out of 211) appeared to exercise this right and the nine incomplete questionnaires were subsequently destroyed. Each completed questionnaire was assigned an identifier; no personally identifying information was used in the analysis of the data (Neuman, 2006) although some

personal information was gathered from the students such as gender, academic records, type of previous school, the socioeconomic status of their families and their parent's education for profiling purposes. Nonetheless, the questionnaire responses were only seen by the researcher and were tabulated into the statistical data sheet. Both the questionnaire responses and the statistical data are securely stored.

As for the principal interviews, both the schools' names (the sample) and the principal interview schedule were submitted to the Ministry of Education in order to get permission to conduct the interviews. This process took a couple of days. Then, a designated official contacted me asking me to collect the Ministry decision. Having agreed to my selection of schools, the officials credited and stamped the principal interview schedule without any changes (see Appendix D). Separate written permissions were issued for each school to participate in the principals' interviews (see Appendix C). It has to be mentioned that, although the Ministry of Education had been informed about the schools selected for the interviews, this did not appear to have any impact on these schools principals, as they still had the right to participate or decline participation. All the principals agreed to participate. The interviewees were also asked to complete an informed consent form prior to the interview wherein the required participation from the interviewees was outlined and an overview of the research study was provided. It was also stressed that their anonymity would be protected at all times (Pring, 2000). All the principal interviews were tape-recorded with their permission. Since the schools' names were stated, the principals' interview records and the transcripts have been protected from being

exposed to a third party. Both the electronic and print copy of the data and the interview recordings are stored securely.

The documents pertaining to the data and results of the study will be destroyed after three years through incineration.

The respondents in the interviews (both the university freshers and the principals) and to the questionnaire survey were assured that under no circumstances would any of the information they had provided be traceable to them as individuals. By doing so, the research reached the highest possible level of confidentiality (Neuman, 2006).

In terms of the study as a whole, and since, in Part 1, it explored the correlation between which type of school an individual attended and their attainment at the end of their studies at Kuwait University, there was a possibility that its findings could lead to a denigration of one type of school over another. Indeed, as discussed, in Chapter 3, the majority of the previous studies have identified private schools as more effective in terms of student attainment. It is my view, however, that it is very important to the education system in Kuwait at the current time to have as much information as possible on the relative effectiveness of private and public schools in preparing young people for higher education. If my findings contribute to the debate about current policy and practice, I view this as a positive outcome of my study.

5.10 Challenges encountered

I encountered two main challenges during the course of my study. The first was a linguistic one. I was, and still am, a fledging individual in terms of the English

Language. In addition, as Arabic is the language of Kuwaitis, I had to first draft my research instruments in English, for discussion with and the approval of my supervisors, and then to translate them into Kuwaiti for use with my participants. There was always the danger, for me, of losing meaning in the translation from one language to another and also because of the different cultures between Kuwait and England. However, having piloted all the instruments, I felt confident that I had been as systematic and robust as I could in the development of the final versions of the instruments. Once the interview data had been collected, I then had to translate some of the transcriptions into English so that I could discuss with my supervisors my coding scheme and framework.

A second challenge of this study was the use of the one–to-one semi-structured interview as a data collection method for the university students and school principals. Sometimes, I would have no control over what the interviewees would find interesting and worth talking about and this might led them to talk about issues that are beyond the research aims of this study. Indeed, in the piloting of the student' and principal interviews we, sometimes, talked about general problems of education in Kuwait and these problems were not directly relevant to my research questions. However, I did further readings to familiarize myself with techniques of handling this problem by using some strategies to quickly and politely get the interviewees back to the focus of my study (Abo-Zaina, et al., 2007). Also, piloting the interviews as such was very helpful to me in developing my interviewing skills. Consequently, the actual interviews with the students' and principals were conducted smoothly and both sides appeared comfortable.

5.11 Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed how and why I moved from a positivistic position to a pragmatic one in relation to methodology. Based on my pragmatist stance, I chose to approach my main research question, which was why private school students' academically outperformed public school students at university, using a mixed methods approach and I have, in this chapter, provided a rationale for this choice.

The research design, which consists of two phases, has also been explained and justified. Also, the choice of the research methods and their chronology were discussed alongside with the advantages and disadvantages of these research instruments both in general and in relation to the context of my study.

The procedures of sampling, research instrumentations, data collection and data analysis were presented. This Chapter also provided discussions on the ethical issues and the two main challenges encountered in the study.

As discussed earlier, Part 2 of this study consisted of two data collection phases. In Chapter 6 I present the findings from Phase 1: the investigations of first year university students' perceptions and experiences of their secondary school and the extent to which they felt their school had prepared them to succeed academically at university. Chapter 7 presents the findings from the interviews with principals. In Chapter 8, the findings, which are presented in Chapters 6 and 7, are discussed.

CHAPTER 6: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF THEIR SECONDARY SCHOOLING

6.1 Introduction

As stated in the previous Chapter, Part 2 of this study consists of two data collection phases. The first comprised two elements: (i) face-to-face interviews with university students and (ii) a questionnaire survey of university students. The second phase comprised interviews with public and private school principals. In this chapter, I present the findings from the analysis of the university students' interview data and the questionnaire data. Accordingly, this chapter has been divided into two main sections. Each section contains the following sub-sections, reflecting the four key areas addressed by both the interviews and the questionnaire:

1- School Leadership.

2- Teachers and the quality of teaching.

3- Parental involvement.

4- Preparation for university.

6.2 Stage 1 – Interviews with university students

A key aim of the face-to-face interviews, which were conducted with an opportunity sample of 16 university freshers (8 public and 8 private), was to gain insights of the issues important to students in order to inform the design of the questionnaire survey and also the interview schedule to be used with the school principals. It was felt important to use the student interviews in this way because, as discussed in Chapters 3, most of the studies into the differences

between public and private schools and into school effectiveness in general have been located in the West. The student interviews afforded me preliminary insights into the perceptions and experiences of students in a very different culture and context. The findings of the student interview are presented below.

6.2.1 School Leadership

6.2.1.1 School mission

Some students from both types of school indicated that their school's mission and goals had mostly been unclear to them. Some students believe that their schools had had no clear goals at all.

> *"I do not think so, nobody cares about the others these days, we were there to get a certificate and they were there to get salaries."*

Public-female

Others, however, reported that their schools did have a clear goal. For example, some public school students believe that their school's key mission had been "students' success". One private school student said that his school was focused on learning "learning and discipline". While four private school students reported that their school's key aim had been *"customer satisfaction"* – by which they meant pleasing the students and particularly, their parents. These students believed that this goal influenced their teachers' attitude to and relationship with students, suggesting that, in order to satisfy the "customer", the teachers and school managements tended to be lenient with their students. Giving customers satisfaction was seen as one means of private schools developing a good reputation:

> *"I think what they were trying to achieve was to develop a good reputation for their school by us… You know a private school is business after all."*

Private-male

6.2.1.2 School ethos

It has to be acknowledged that the students found difficulty differentiating between management, discipline and ethos. This is a linguistic and cultural problem as, for example, no Arabic synonym for the word ethos, and when I tried to explain what ethos means they mixed it up with management. In general, the responses of public school students suggested that the ethos of public schools varied widely from lenient, to moderately strict and strict. While some public school managements reportedly using heavy punishments when students violated school rules, others seemed to have been lenient even when school rules were violated.

> *"I had to stand up for two hours if I had long nails or if I put even very little make up and sometimes it was not make-up, it was like some lotion to protect my face from the sun."*

Public-female

There was evidence that private schools tend to be more lenient with their students than public schools; the reason why private schools were lenient, according to the private school students, was that their school management and teachers had to handle them with care as a strategy of customer satisfaction. Only one private school interviewee reported her school to be strict and the majority of private school interviewees indicated that their school had been lenient in its behaviour towards pupils' minor misdemeanors.

"They were very lax. Sometimes we were able to get out of the school and buy sandwiches and return back and they do not know and even if they knew they would swear a bit at us and ask us not to do it again".

Private-female

Nevertheless, public schools were found to be more enjoyable than private schools. Of the eight public school students, six reported that they had enjoyed their schools. According to them, their schools had been socially and academically enjoyable.

"I enjoyed the school more than the university because we were very close to each other and I really miss the school."

Public-female

On the other hand, of eight private school students, four interviewees regarded their school as an enjoyable place while the other four reported that their schools had mostly been boring. The reason might be due to the fact that public schools accept only Kuwaiti students. Non-Kuwaiti students can only join public schools when at least one of their parents is a teacher in a public school (See Chapter 2). On the other hand, there are no nationality restrictions for a student to be accepted in a private school. This means, in terms of the nationality, public schools are far more homogenous compared to private schools. As a result, I tend to believe that public school pupils, on the one hand, like their schools as they can easily make friends from the same culture. However, private school students might also enjoy school less because there is more pressure on them to perform academically well and because they are more culturally heterogeneous.

6.2.1.3 Discipline at school

The students were asked whether their schools constitute a disciplined and safe climate that was conducive to learning. The responses of the students of both systems suggest that their schools had constituted a disciplined and safe climate for learning.

6.2.1.4 Student potential fulfillment

Most of the students of both systems believe that they had fulfilled their potential at school. Six public school and six private school graduates expressed their happiness with what they had achieved at school, as they were able to join the university college they had wanted. The remaining four interviewees, who were unhappy with what they had achieved, believe that they could have achieved better, but it was not clear from their responses why this apparent under-achievement had taken place.

6.2.2 Teachers and the quality of teaching

6.2.2.1 Characteristics of effective teacher

Students were asked to describe the characteristics of their 'best teachers'. The interviewees identified seven characteristics of their best teachers, as follows:

- ➢ Personality (nine students).
- ➢ Good personal relationship with students (five students).
- ➢ Focused on students' learning and achievement (three students).
- ➢ Excellent subject knowledge (three students).
- ➢ Enthusiasm for subject (three students).
- ➢ High marker (two students).

➢ Inspirational (two student).

The responses of the interviewees indicated that the curriculum content of the lessons of their best teachers had not been different from the lessons of other teachers. However, their best teachers seem to have used some engaging pedagogic strategies in order to make the students attracted to the lessons. For example, some students believe that their teachers had been able to attract their attentions by applying theory to their students' own every day experiences:

> *"For example, when he was going to teach us about electromagnetic cells he started "when you go to the market place and you are about to pass from an automatic door, the door opens from itself because of the electromagnetic cells the door has"*
>
> **Public-male**

Teacher commitment, enthusiasm and being focused on students' learning and achievement also seemed to engage students with learning:

> *"Lessons were alike not in my school only… in the whole country but the difference can be found in the extent to which a teacher is serious… the extent to which a teacher believes in his job, which is to educate a generation who is able to improve their country and themselves."*
>
> **Private-male**

Some students reported that their best teachers had used learning aids such as PowerPoint presentations and board illustrations. According to those students, teaching aids had made the lessons "fun" and easier to understand. Indeed, a quarter of the interviewees explicitly used the word "fun" in describing their best teachers' lessons.

6.2.2.2 Quality of teaching

Most students of both systems believe that they had enjoyed good quality teaching at their schools. However, two students, of whom one graduated from public school and the other graduated from private school, indicted that the quality of the teaching was poor at their schools.

Some students suggested that the quality of the teaching at their schools had been very good, especially at grade 12. It seemed that the school principals tend to appoint the best teachers to teach grade 12. The reason why some schools appear to follow this strategy might be due to the fact that a larger proportion of the students' percentage (60%) is attributed to their attainment in grade 12, whereas the other (40%) is divided between grade 10 and grade 11. As I will discuss later in this thesis, the reasons for positioning the best teachers in grade 12 were explored with school principals themselves.

6.2.2.3 Teacher-student relationship

Students of both systems reported that their teachers had mostly been friendly with them. Indeed, of the sixteen, nine interviewees reported that their relationship with their teachers had been informal and they had dealt with them as if they had been their friends. Of these nine interviewees, three said that in addition to their teachers being friendly with them, they had also been someone to turn to for academic support.

> *"It was very good. Most of them were like friends. Sometimes I went to English teachers' room to practice English with my English teacher and I could discuss my problems even personal ones with her."*

Public-female

On the other hand, five interviewees indicated that the relationship between them and their teachers had been formal. *"Formal … a student and a teacher"* a student said. Furthermore, one private school student reported a bad relationship with her teachers. According to her, the reason was racial as most of her teachers had been from a different nationality and those teachers had been friendly with the students who were from the same nationality.

6.2.2.4 Assessment, feedback and monitoring

Assessment and feedback

Students in my sample indicated that they understood how their work had been assessed. Students of both systems (public and private) reported that tests were the main means of assessment for which they received written feedback. When asked: "Did you know what you had to do to achieve a good mark for each piece of work?", the response of one public school student exemplified that of the other students, stating: "*I had to study hard to get good marks and every student knows this fact"*. Indeed, in order to achieve good marks, students explicitly or implicitly mentioned that they had followed this "success strategy" but they did not focus on a particular or specific action.

In relation to feedback, students of both systems reported that they had received "oral feedback" from their teachers. While this kind of feedback was mainly given instantly in classrooms, some teachers asked their students to visit them at their offices to discuss their progress. *"Yes I did, they sometimes asked me to come to their office to advise me,"* a student said. Other students, however, reported receiving feedback in the form of a gesture.

> *"Yes I did, some teachers gave instant feedback by smiling or sulking at me. They used to advise us to work harder when our marks are under average".*

Public-female

The interviewees were asked whether oral feedback was helpful. Although the students indicted that oral feedback was mostly helpful, it seems that sometimes it was unconstructive.

> *"Yes, sometimes it was useful and others harmful. Because some teachers used harsh words."*

Private-female

The students' responses tended to suggest that the feedback received both in public and private schools was largely summative in nature. There appeared to be very little specific formative feedback from the teacher as to what students should do to improve their work.

Monitoring progress

Of the eight public school students, only one student indicated that his school had been effective in tracking his academic progress. In contrast most private school students reported that their schools had been effective in this respect. Only one student, of the eight, regarded his private school as ineffective in this regard. The data from my interview sample suggest that private schools, on the whole, are more effective than public schools in tracking the students' academic progress.

Academic support

The students interviewed in this study indicated that academic support was often available but not always helpful. In spite of the fact that it is illegal in Kuwait (see Chapter 8) to receive private tuition, both public and private school students said that, when they had been struggling with their studies they had received private tuition, which had been, according to them, most helpful. When private tuition was not available for any reason, a student would contact their classmates to obtain a photocopy of the papers provided by a private tuition teacher. One student summarizes the reason behind that as he states, *"private tuition teachers work conscientiously"*.

The students were also asked about the extent to which they had depended on private tuition: their answers fluctuated between moderate to high dependency. *"They were more important than my schoolteachers,"* a student said. Another student said that he had depended on them *"70 to 80 percent"*. When they were asked how much private tuition they received the answers indicated that some of them had used private tuitions for each subject (up to 8 subjects). However, some students seemed to have used less private tuition, *"I had three or four teachers who came to teach me regularly and about two teachers irregularly who used to come only on my request,"* a student answered. In general, the number of private tutors employed by public school students appeared higher than that of private school students. Since using private tutors can be considered as a powerful confounding variable, I will be investigating this phenomenon further in both the student questionnaire and the principal interview.

6.2.3 Parental involvement

Parents of private school students were more involved with discussions about their children's progress than those of public schools. Of the eight private school students, five interviewees indicated that their parents were intensively involved with their academic progress in school. Two interviewees, however, reported modest levels of parental school involvement and one interviewee reported no involvement at all.

Of the eight public school graduates, only two interviewees believed that their parents had been intensively involved with discussions about their progress in school. The answers of the other six interviewees fluctuated between modest to limited parental school involvement.

The abovementioned responses of the interviewees echo what they reported about their school monitoring their progress. Private school graduates said that their schools did monitor their progress, so it might be that they involved parents in discussions about their children's progress that they had monitored. On the other hand, and as virtually no public school student reported that their school monitored their progress, it is not surprising that only two mentioned high levels of parental involvement.

Although it is not directly related to my research questions, it was noticed that sometimes only one of the two parents got involved with their children progress while the other did not. The responses suggested that, in this case, it is likely to be the father who gets involved with their children academic progress.

> *"My father was involved very much and my mother does care about my health only, I would say my mother is for my body and my father is for my brain."*

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The public school students would have preferred more involvement as only one public school student believed that there should have been less parental involvement. By contrast, private school graduates tend to prefer less parental involvement, as only two students believed that they would have preferred more parental involvement. In other words, the students wanted the opposite of what they had.

The reasons why a student would prefer more or less parental involvement were also alike. Students who preferred more parental involvement believe that this would have prompted them to achieve even better grades.

> *"For sure more… that would make me feel better and would prompt me to achieve even better…"*

On the other hand, students who preferred less parental involvement indicate that the less parental involvement is the more self-confidence one would develop. According to them, intensive parental involvement might lead to their embarrassment among their classmates.

> *"Less… Because sometimes I felt that some teachers did not welcome them and I could not blame the teachers because mostly my mom came to ask about silly things, which made me embarrassed. Besides there were some dates on which parents are expected to come to school and they already were a lot … it was monthly I think but my parents used to come weekly and sometime twice weekly"*

Indeed, of the sixteen students who were interviewed, eight students believe that their parents should have been involved in a normal way or even should not have been involved at all.

> "I do not like them to be involved because I can handle my own affairs, I was already 18 years and I believe that if a person could not manage at this age they wouldn't manage even at 40"
>
> **Private-female**

Consequently, and since "parental involvement" is regarded in the related literature to be one of the most important factors that might explain the differences in the students' academic attainment, the level of parental involvement of the students of both systems was investigated further in both the student questionnaire and the principal interviews.

6.2.4 Preparation for university

6.2.4.1 Guidance for university

The responses of the interviewees to the extent to which they received advice or guidance in relation to what college they should take at university indicated that their schools had made modest efforts in this regard. Of the sixteen interviewees, eight private school and five public school students reported that they had received no advice or guidance in relation to what course they should take at university. However, it seems that they were not able to explain why their schools did not advise them, *"I do not know why"* and *"you should ask the school,"* two students said.

On the other hand, three public school graduates indicated that they had received some kind of school guidance. Two interviewees said that their

teachers had advised them and suggested some particular colleges that might be suitable for them. And one interviewee reported that his school had arranged a seminar for the Chairman of Kuwait University General Relationship to advise the students about their college choice. Therefore, and to some extent, public schools seem to be better than private schools in terms of providing their students with advice or guidance on what course they should take at university.

6.2.4.2 Knowledge and skills required for university success

The students were also asked about the knowledge/skills/qualities that are needed to succeed at university. The interviewees believed that a student at university should be characterized by a package of skills and qualities. Almost all the interviewees reported independent learning and using the library as important skills for success at university. English language skills were also highly valued. Almost all the interviewees reported that they have to have good English skills in order to succeed at university, because the medium of instruction is English. In addition, many interviewees believed that technology using and reading and writing skills are very important to succeed at university. Time management skills are also regarded by seven interviewees to be very important for success at university.

6.2.4.2 Preparation for university

Most of the interviewees' believed that their schools had prepared them for university. Of the sixteen interviewees, twelve reported that they had been well prepared by their schools for university. They believe that their schools provided them with the knowledge and skills needed in order to succeed at university.

"Yes, after all they provided me with the knowledge I needed"

Private-female

Two public and two private school students, however, believe that their schools did not prepare them for university. *"I prepared myself for university"* an interviewee answered. Another interviewee reported that she finds a big difference between what she is studying at university and what she had studied at school. The responses of the interviewees to this question suggest that 'preparation for university' is considered by the students to mean the extent to which their schools provided them with the knowledge and skills needed for academic success at university.

6.2.4.3 Suggestions for university guidance

At the end of the interview, the interviewees suggested some ideas that they believe to be useful in terms of introducing secondary school students to university. Although most of them suggested arranging introductory tours to university, some students suggested other ideas. Three students, for example, suggested arranging seminars at school in which some university students are to come and discuss some issues related to the process of admissions and registrations at university.

"I would ask some graduates to come and discuss this issue with the students."

Public-female

One private school student suggested distributing a booklet that gives the students a brief presentation about every college. The booklet may also include

the conditions and requirements of the university different colleges and the career potential for each university's degree.

The students' responses and suggestions in this sub-section will be an area of investigation in the student questionnaire survey and the principal interview since it directly related to some of my research sub-question.

6.2.5 Summary

The freshers' interviews were somewhat disappointing in the amount and quality of the information gathered. I was aware that the students had lectures to attend and I therefore kept the interviews fairly short. In addition, , the students tended to give only short answers to my questions. However, important differences were found between public and private school students in relation to their parental involvement. The parents of private school students were more involved than parents of public school students in discussions with their children's schools about their academic progress. Some students suggested that there is a relationship between the level of parental involvement and the students' academic attainment.

On the other hand, except for the difference stated above in terms of the students' parental involvement, no substantial differences were detected between private and public school students' responses to the other questions posed in this interview. Nonetheless, the data allowed the identification of issues important to students, which required further exploration in both the student questionnaire survey and the school principal interviews. These emerging issues are summarized below and were converted to statements in the student questionnaire survey as shown at the end of this sub-section.

According to the perceptions of the students, the ethos of public schools seemed to be stricter than those of private schools, which were often described as lenient. Unlike public schools, developing a good reputation appeared to have been a key aim of some private schools, which might have led them to compete with each other. Nevertheless, public schools were found to be more enjoyable than private schools. Since school leadership is suggested by school effectiveness literature to be one of the most important factors in determining students' academic attainment, it was investigated in further detail in the subsequent instruments after correcting for the linguistic shortcomings that has been detected in the students' interview schedule.

The quality of the teaching was generally considered to be very good in both systems by the students interviewed. In addition, students of both systems, on the whole, had good relationships with their teachers. They also provided the study with characteristics that an effective teacher should possess. However, and although these issues will be investigated in further detail in the student questionnaire, the student interview findings did not tell us about other important issues such as teachers' expectations of their students. These issues were addressed in the questionnaire survey and principal interviews.

According to their responses, the students of public and private schools understood how their work was assessed. They both received written and oral feedback although this feedback was largely summative in nature. However, private schools were found to be more effective than public schools in tracking their students' academic progress. Paradoxically, both public and private school students used private tutors although they reported the availability of school

academic support. Two important issues emerged and require further exploration. The first is the issue of using private tutors, as it appeared that the students depended heavily on this strategy. The second concerns the availability of formative feedback, which was not reported by almost all of the interviewed students, even though the relevant literature seemed to emphasize formative feedback as an important factor that enhances students' academic attainment (see Chapter 3). Accordingly, student assessment and feedback will be an area of investigation in the subsequent research tools.

The responses of the interviewees suggested that they regard 'preparation for university' to mean the extent to which their schools provided them with the knowledge and skills needed for academic success at university. According to the interviewees' perceptions, both public and private schools appeared to have prepared their students for university. They reported that they had been provided by their schools with the knowledge and skills needed for success at university. Accordingly, the knowledge and skills, which were suggested by the interviewed students to be important for success at university, were investigated in detail in the students' survey to determine whether significant differences exist between the students of the said two systems in relation to possession of these skills.

Since private school students in my study were found to have academically outperformed public school students at university (see Chapter 4), the extent to which these issues can explain this phenomenon will be further investigated through the student questionnaire survey, which utilized a much large sample.

Also, the categorical nature of the responses in the questionnaire survey enables quantification and detection of differences.

Alongside the factors identified in the literature review (see Chapter 3), the student questionnaire contained statements that drew directly on the issues emerging from the student interviews. These emergent issues were converted into the following statements (see Appendix D):

- ➢ The administrative staff at school was lenient (see sub-section 6.2.1.1).
- ➢ The feedback the teachers gave me explained how I could improve my work (see sub-section 6.2.3.1)
- ➢ Teachers used a variety of teaching methods to make lessons interesting (see sub-section 6.2.2.1).
- ➢ I felt comfortable asking questions in class at school (see sub-section 6.2.3.1).
- ➢ My teachers had excellent subject knowledge (see sub-section 6.2.2.1).
- ➢ Some of my teachers were inspirational (see sub-section 6.2.2.1).
- ➢ My schoolteachers were enthusiastic for their subjects (see sub-section 6.2.2.1).
- ➢ Employing a personal tutor outside school was a necessity for good academic achievement (see Sub-section 6.2.3.3).
- ➢ Help, within the school, was available if I was struggling with my studies (see sub-section 6.2.3.3).
- ➢ I would like it if my parents were involved more with discussions about my progress in school (see sub-section 6.2.4).

- ➢ My school advised me on what course I should take at university (see sub-section 6.2.5.3).

- ➢ I took the advice of my school when deciding on what course to take at university (see sub-section 6.2.5.3).

- ➢ The subject knowledge I learned at school helped me when I started my studies at university (see sub-section 6.2.5.3).

- ➢ My school prepared me well for the independent learning I would need to undertake at university (see sub-section 6.2.5.3).

- ➢ My school helped me to develop my time management skills (see sub-section 6.2.5.3).

- ➢ My school showed me how to use a library (see sub-section 6.2.5.3).

- ➢ My school showed me how to access electronic resources (see sub-section 6.2.5.3).

- ➢ I learned how to write in an academic way at my school (see sub-section 6.2.5.3).

- ➢ My school prepared me well for my academic studies at university (see sub-section 6.2.5.3).

The findings from the student questionnaire are presented in the next section.

6.3 Stage 2: Questionnaire survey of the university students

This section presents the data from Phase 1- Stage 2 (see Chapter 5) - the questionnaire survey of Kuwait university students.

As stated in Chapter 5, two stages of cluster-sampling method were used to choose the student questionnaire sample. In the first, three colleges (out of 12) were chosen at random, College of Medicine, College of Law and College of

Engineering. In the second, three English language classes were chosen randomly from each of these three colleges using the same sampling method namely a cluster-sampling method. Thus, the sample of the student questionnaire consisted of 211 students of whom 66 private school graduates and 145 public school graduates. Nine questionnaires were discarded as they were returned incomplete. Two hundred and two questionnaires were analysed; of these 63 questionnaires were filled in by private school students and 139 by public school students.

This section is divided into two sub-sections; sample characteristics and the analysis of the questionnaire five components. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the characteristics of the students' sample. Inferential statistical tests were used to determine whether statistically significant differences exist between public and private school students in relation to the five key areas addressed by the questionnaire.

6.3.1 Sample characteristics:

6.3.1.1 Social Class and Wealth

(a) Social Class

My supervisors suggested that I should address the social class to explore whether my perception of Kuwait society was shared by others. The reason for their suggestion was that other studies have shown socio-economic status to be a factor in predicting academic attainment. Therefore, and although, as discussed earlier in this thesis, I believed that Kuwait does not have a class system, the students were asked to which social class they felt they belonged for contextual reasons. Table 6.1 sets out the findings.

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Table (6.1) Percentages of Participants' Social Class according to School Type

Social Class	School type	
	Public school	Private school
Lower-class	0%	0%
Middle-class	97%	73%
Upper-class	3%	27%

It should be mentioned first that no participants considered themselves as belonging to the lower class. On the other hand, most participants believed that they belong to the middle class no matter which school type they had been graduated from, and a few of the participants considered themselves as belonging to the upper class. However, it can be noticed that the percentage of private school graduates who believed that they come from an upper-class background is larger compared to public school graduates.

(b) Family monthly income

Participants were asked to indicate the level of their family's monthly income. Table 6.2 sets out the results:

Table (6.2) Levels of Participants' Family Income according to School Type

		Family monthly income				
		Less than 1000 KD	1000 KD - 2000 KD	2000 KD - 3000 KD	More than 3000 KD	Total
School type	Public school	0%	28%	55%	17%	139 (100%)
	Private school	0%	0%	16%	84%	63 (100%)

The table shows that the majority of the participants' family income was more than 2000 KD (4500 GBP). However, private school students' families clearly enjoy a higher family income in comparison with those of public schools. While only 17% of the families of public school students make more than 3000 KD monthly (6750 GBP), 84% of those of private schools make more than 3000 KD. Moreover, while none of the private school participants' families make less than 2000 KD, quarter of their counterparts' families earn less than 2000.

6.3.1.2 Parents' education

(a) Fathers

Table 6.3 shows the final stage of education attended by participants' fathers' according to their school type.

Table (6.3) Stage of education attended by participants' fathers

		Father's education					
		No schooling	Finished Elementary School	Finished Intermediate School	Finished Secondary Schoo	Graduate	Total
School type	Public school	1%	4%	21%	41%	33%	139 (100%)
	Private school	0%	0%	0%	16%	84%	63 (100%)

Table 6.3 shows that there are significant differences between fathers' education of public and private school participants. While 67% of public school participants' fathers finished secondary school or less, 100% of private school participants' fathers finished secondary school. 41% of public school participants' fathers had a secondary school certificate, whereas 84% of private school participants' fathers were graduates.

(b) Mothers

Table 6.4 shows the final stage of education attended by participants' mothers according to their school type.

Table (6.4) Stage of education attended by participants' mothers

		Mother's education				
		Finished Elementary School %	Finished Intermediate School %	Finished Secondary School %	Graduate %	Total
School type	Public school	1	13	50	36	(139) 100%
	Private school	0	5	25	70	(63) 100%

Table 6.4 shows that there are significant differences between mothers' education of public and private school participants. Mothers of private school students appear to have received more education than public school students' mothers. While 64.8% of public school participants' mothers finished secondary school or less, 95.3% of private school participants' mothers finished secondary school or more.

In this sub-section, the families of private school students were found to enjoy higher monthly income than the families of public school students. They also appeared to have received more education compared to their counterparts from public schools.

6.3.2 Students' perceptions and experiences of their secondary school.

As stated in Chapter 5, drawing on the literature review, six alternative hypotheses were tested in order to establish if there were statistically significant differences in the extent to which public and private schools prepared their students for university, alongside the possible differences in the factors that might be responsible for the differences in preparation for university. The findings of these statistical tests are presented below. The commentary below each table is used to identify where there are large differences between the responses of private and public school students. I have not commented where there are small differences.

6.3.2.1 School leadership

Table 6.5 and Table 6.6 present the percentages in relation to the component of school leadership and school ethos according to education system.

Table (6.5) Percentages of school leadership according to education system.

N	Statements	School type	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	The administrative staff at school was helpful.	Public	2%	19%	88%	1%
		Private	2%	0%	57%	41%
2	The administrative staff at my school treated the students fairly.	Public	1%	18%	78%	3%
		Private	1%	2%	64%	33%

3	My school helped me achieve my potential.	Public	2%	43%	53%	2%
		Private	2%	0%	52%	46%
4	The school had a clear vision of what it was seeking to achieve for its students.	Public	4%	48%	47%	1%
		Private	2%	0%	81%	17%
5	The school met the students' academic needs.	Public	2%	24%	71%	3%
		Private	2%	1%	45%	52%
6	The administrative staff at school was focused on students' learning.	Public	1%	87%	10%	2%
		Private	0%	2%	55%	43%
7	My school had high expectations for students on what students could achieve.	Public	4%	31%	63%	2%
		Private	1%	2%	67%	30%

Across the range of measures displayed in this Table 6.5, private school administrative staff appeared to have treated their students more fairly than those of public schools. Almost all private school students agreed, of whom 46% strongly agreed, that their schools helped them achieve their potential whereas almost half of public school students did not. Furthermore, and unlike private schools, more than the half of public school students believed that their school lacked a clear vision of what their school was seeking to achieve for their students. In general, in the view of the students surveyed, the administrative staff of public schools did not appear to have focused on their students' learning as much as private schools did or to have as high expectations for their students.

Table (6.6) school ethos according to education system

N	Statements	School type	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
8	Discipline was good in my school.	Public	1%	11%	76%	12%
		Private	1%	2%	46%	61%
9	High standards of behavior were expected of students at my school.	Public	1%	19%	73%	7%
		Private	0%	2%	64%	34%
10	The administrative staff at school was lenient.	Public	2%	46%	48%	4%
		Private	2%	7%	67%	24%
11	My learning was sometimes disrupted by badly behaved students in my class.	Public	13%	76%	7%	6%
		Private	48%	49%	2%	1%
12	The students and teachers were respectful to each other at school.	Public	2%	55%	39%	4%
		Private	2%	0%	58%	40%
13	The students and the administrative staff of the school were respectful to each other.	Public	1%	52%	43%	4%
		Private	2%	2%	44%	52%
14	Overall I was satisfied with the way my school treated me.	Public	1%	22%	73%	4%
		Private	1%	3%	72%	24%
15	The school cared about the well-being of its students.	Public	2%	5%	91%	2%
		Private	0%	2%	66%	32%

16	I felt safe at school.	Public	1%	30%	67%	2%
		Private	2%	2%	81%	15%
17	I feel proud that I attended my school.	Public	1%	18%	79%	2%
		Private	0%	2%	69%	29%
18	I enjoyed my school.	Public	1%	3%	94%	2%
		Private	0%	2%	51%	47%

The administrative staff at private schools was generally found to be more lenient compared with that of public schools. The interpersonal relationships at schools were an issue of difference between public and private schools. Almost all private school students reported that the students and teachers were respectful to each other, and the students and the administrative staffs were also respectful to each other. On the other hand, more than half of public school students did not agree that they had respectful relationships between them and their teachers or between them and the administrative staff of their school. This might be a general feeling that public school students had as a result of being treated unfairly as fifth of them responded in another statement. Expectedly, since fifth of them reported unfair treatment on the part of their schools in an earlier statement, 23% of public school participants reported that they were unsatisfied with the way their schools treated them. In contrast, almost all private school participants expressed their satisfaction with the way their schools treated them.

✦ **First null hypothesis:** There is no statistically significant difference in school leadership between public and private schools. In analysing this hypothesis, the researcher used Independent Sample t-test; Table 6.7 shows the relevant results:

Table (6.7) Independent Samples t- test results revealing the differences in school leadership between public and private schools.

Education system	N	Mean	T	Sig.
Private schools	63	3.36	8.41	0.00
Public schools	139	2.71		

Table 6.7 presents the result of t-test of the impact of school leadership on students' university preparation according to education system. The means for private and public school participants' responses were compared to determine if there were any differences that could be explained by the education system. The results indicated that there are statistically significant differences ($p<. 05$) in the component of "school leadership" in favour of private schools. Therefore, the null hypothesis, H01, is rejected for the sample while the alternative hypothesis, H1, is supported. The mean of private school students is higher than the mean of public school students. Thus, and according to the perception of the respondents, it can be concluded that private schools were viewed more positively by their students in terms of school leadership.

6.3.2.2 Teachers and the quality of teaching

Table 6.8 and Table 6.9 present the percentages in relation to the component of "Teacher characteristics" and "the quality of teaching" according to education system.

Table (6.8) Teacher and teaching quality according to education system.

N	Statements	School type	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
19	Teachers used a variety of teaching methods to make lessons interesting.	Public	2%	13%	82%	3%
		Private	2%	0%	74%	24%
20	The teachers were respectful to students at my school.	Public	3%	52%	43%	2%
		Private	2%	0%	8%	90%
21	The teachers at school were skillful at teaching.	Public	5%	2%	57%	36%
		Private	2%	3%	51%	44%
22	My teachers had excellent subject knowledge.	Public	2%	18%	74%	6%
		Private	2%	0%	75%	23%
23	Some of my teachers were inspirational.	Public	2%	7%	77%	15%
		Private	1%	2%	59%	38%
24	My schoolteachers were enthusiastic for their subjects.	Public	3%	13%	79%	5%
		Private	3%	2%	53%	40%

In general, teachers of both systems used a variety of teaching methods to make their lessons interesting. The majority of the students of private school students agreed that they had positive personal relationships with their teachers whereas only half of their public school counterparts agreed so. In general, most of the participants of both systems believe that their teachers were skillful at teaching, had excellent subject knowledge and were enthusiastic for their subjects.

Table (6.9) Quality of teaching according to education system.

N	Statements	School type	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
25	The quality of teaching at my school was generally good.	Public	2%	11%	67%	20%
		Private	2%	1%	35%	62%
26	My teachers were concerned with how well students were learning.	Public	2%	12%	81%	5%
		Private	2%	0%	55%	43%
27	My teachers helped me achieve my potential.	Public	3%	14%	67%	16%
		Private	0%	1%	62%	37%
28	I received good academic support from teachers at my school.	Public	13%	25%	55%	7%
		Private	0%	2%	57%	41%
29	My teachers had high expectations for what I could achieve.	Public	10%	14%	69%	7%
		Private	0%	5%	51%	44%
	I found the work I had to do	Public	2%	37%	57%	4%

30	was at the right level for my ability.	Private	2%	0%	56%	42%
31	My teachers tried to accommodate the individual learning styles of students	Public	15%	19%	64%	2%
		Private	2%	18%	53%	27%
32	I felt comfortable asking questions in class at school.	Public	2%	7%	87%	4%
		Private	2%	0%	33%	65%
33	Meeting with my teachers outside of class to discuss my academic progress was easy.	Public	1%	4%	92 %	3%
		Private	0%	2%	23%	75%
34	The personal relationships between me and my teachers at school were positive.	Public	9%	28%	32%	31%
		Private	0%	2%	61%	37%
35	Employing a personal tutor outside school was a necessity for good academic achievement.	Public	1%	3%	44%	52%
		Private	40%	57%	1%	2%
36	Overall I was satisfied with the quality of teaching at my school.	Public	1%	1%	96%	2%
		Private	0%	0%	54%	46%

62% of private school participants strongly agreed that the quality of teaching at their schools was good, while only 20% of public school participants strongly agreed. 41% of private school participants strongly agreed that they had received good academic support from their teachers, whereas only 7% of public school participants strongly agreed. Only 3% of the private school participants found that employing a personal tutor outside school was necessary. On the

contrary, 96% of their public school counterparts reported that employing a personal tutor was necessary for good academic attainment.

✦ **Second null hypothesis:** There is no statistically significant difference in teachers and the quality of teaching between public and private schools. In examining this hypothesis, the researcher used Independent Sample t-test; Table 6.10 shows the relevant results.

Table (6.10) Independent Samples t- test results revealing the quality of teaching according to education system.

Education system	N	Mean	T	Sig.
Private schools	63	3.40	1.59	0.00
Public schools	139	2.88		

Table 6.10 presents the result of a t-test of the quality of teaching according to education system; the means for private and public school participants' responses were compared to determine if there were any differences in the means that could be attributed to the education system. The results indicated that there are statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) in teachers and the quality of teaching between public and private schools. Therefore, the null hypothesis, H02, is rejected for the sample while the alternative hypothesis, H2, is supported. The

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mean of private school participants is higher than the mean of public school participants. Thus, and based on the students' perceptions, it can be concluded that private schools were better than public schools in terms of teachers and the quality of teaching.

6.3.2.3 Assessment, feedback and monitoring

Table 6.11 presents the percentages in relation to the component of "Assessment, feedback and monitoring" according to education system.

Table (6.11) Assessment, feedback and monitoring according to education system.

N	Statements	School type	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
37	Teachers gave me regular feedback on how I was doing academically.	Public	1%	4%	92%	3%
		Private	0%	2%	45%	53%
38	My teachers gave me oral feedback regularly.	Public	2%	28%	56%	14%
		Private	2%	0%	37%	61%
39	My teachers gave me written feedback regularly	Public	1%	6%	91%	2%
		Private	0%	2%	64%	34%
40	The feedback the teachers gave me explained how I could improve my work	Public	1%	34%	64%	1%
		Private	0%	2%	54%	44%
41	My teachers explained how students' work was graded.	Public	1%	26%	69%	4%
		Private	0%	2%	62%	36%
42	I understood how my work was graded.	Public	10%	15%	47%	28%
		Private	0%	2%	41%	57%

43	Teachers set homework regularly.	Public	5%	21%	54%	20%
		Private	0%	2%	27%	71%
44	I always did my homework.	Public	2%	41%	56%	1%
		Private	0%	2%	48%	50%
45	The school was effective in tracking my academic progress.	Public	3%	78%	28%	1%
		Private	1%	2%	42%	55%
46	Help, within the school, was available if I was struggling with my studies.	Public	2%	63%	34%	1%
		Private	0%	1%	47%	52%
47	Overall I am satisfied with the way my teachers assessed me.	Public	1%	2%	94%	3%
		Private	0%	2%	36%	62%

Table 6.11 indicates that the private school students received more oral and written feedback than the public school students. In public schools, and unlike private ones, feedback was not always helpful, no matter oral or written. Almost all private school students believe that their school tracked their academic progress effectively whereas the majority their counterparts believe that their schools were not effective in tracking their academic progress.

Almost all the private school students surveyed agreed that help, within the school, was available if they were struggling with their studies, whereas only third of public school students reported the availability of help within their schools. This result might account for why most public school students found that employing personal tutors to be necessary to achieve academically.

✦ **Third null hypothesis:** There is no statistically significant difference in the assessment, feedback and monitoring between public and private schools. In order to examine this hypothesis, the researcher used Independent Sample t-test; Table 6.12 shows the relevant results:

Table (6.12) Independent Samples t- test results revealing the differences in assessment, feedback and monitoring between public and private schools.

Education system	N	Mean	T	Sig.
Private schools	63	3.54	0.88	0.00
Public schools	139	2.66		

Table 6.12 presents the result of t-test of the quality of the impact of assessment, feedback and monitoring on students' university preparation according to education system. The means for private and public school participants' responses were compared to determine if there were any differences in the means that could be explained by the education system. The results indicated that there are statistically significant differences (p<. 05) in assessment, feedback and monitoring. Therefore, the null hypothesis, H03, is rejected for the sample while the alternative hypothesis, H3, is supported. The mean of private school graduates is higher than the mean of public school

graduates. Thus, and according to the perceptions of these respondents, it can be concluded that private schools were more effective than public schools in terms of assessment, feedback and monitoring.

6.3.2.4 Parental involvement

Table 6.13 presents the percentages in relation to the component of "parental involvement" according to education system.

Table (6.13) Parental involvement according to education system.

N	Statements	School type	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
48	My parents were involved with school about my academic progress.	Public	1%	5%	78%	16%
		Private	0%	0%	6%	94%
49	I would like it if my parents were involved more with discussions about my progress in school.	Public	2%	3%	20%	75%
		Private	11%	46%	32%	11%
50	My parents encouraged me to study.	Public	1%	4%	92%	2%
		Private	0%	0%	5%	95%
51	My parents were keen that I achieve high marks at school.	Public	1%	9%	86%	4%
		Private	0%	0%	8%	92%
52	My parents wanted me to go to university.	Public	2%	9%	86%	3%
		Private	0%	0%	9%	91%
	My parents rewarded me if I	Public	1%	9%	78%	12%

| 53 | passed exams. | Private | 0% | 0% | 5% | 95% |

As Table 6.13 indicates, a large majority of both private and public school students indicated that their parents had been involved with school about their academic progress. However, 57% of private school students reported that they would not like it if their parents had been involved more with discussions about their academic progress in school. This is perhaps because there were already high levels of parental involvement. In contrast, almost all public school participants agreed that they would like it if their parents were involved more with discussions about their academic progress in school. Most of parents of both private and public schools appeared to have encouraged their children to study. Also, most of private and public school students reported that their parents had been keen that they achieve high marks at school and their parents rewarded them if they had passed exams. On the other hand, while 100% of the parents of private school students wanted their children to go to university, 11% of the parents of their public school counterparts had not apparently wanted them to.

✦ **Fourth null hypothesis:** There is no statistically significant difference in parental involvement between public and private school students. In order to analyse this hypothesis, the researcher used Independent Sample t-test; Table 6.14 shows the relevant results:

Table (6.14) Independent Samples t- test results revealing the differences in parental involvement of public and private school students.

Education system	N	Mean	T	Sig.
Private schools	63	3.68	1.41	0.00
Public schools	139	3.01		

Table 6.14 presents the result of t-test of parental involvement according to education system; the means for private and public school participants' responses were compared to determine if there were any differences in the means that could be explained by the education system. The results indicated that there are statistically significant differences (p<. 05) in the component of "parental involvement" in favour of private schools. Therefore, the null hypothesis, H04, is rejected for the sample while the alternative hypothesis, H4, is supported. The mean of private school students was higher than the mean of public school students. Thus, and according to the respondent's perceptions, it can be said that the students of private schools had higher parental involvement than the students of public schools.

6.3.2.5 Preparation for university

Table 6.15 presents the percentages in relation to the component of "preparation for university" according to school type.

Table (6.15) Preparation for university according to school type.

N	Statements	School type	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly disagree
54	My school advised me on what course I should take at university.	Public	3%	56%	40%	1%
		Private	0%	2%	13%	85%
55	I took the advice of my school when deciding on what course to take at university	Public	1%	82%	16%	1%
		Private	0%	2%	68%	30%
56	The subject knowledge I learned at school helped me when I started my studies at university.	Public	14%	35%	49%	2%
		Private	0%	1%	34%	65%
57	My school prepared me well for the independent learning I would need to undertake at university.	Public	22%	27%	50%	1%
		Private	2%	0%	27%	77%
58	My school helped me to develop my time management skills.	Public	15%	52%	32%	1%
		Private	2%	0%	39%	59%
59	My school showed me how to use a library.	Public	6%	61%	31%	2%
		Private	0%	2%	38%	60%

60	My school showed me how to access electronic resources.	Public	11%	62%	26%	1%
		Private	0%	2%	49%	49%
61	I learned how to write in an academic way at my school.	Public	6%	47%	46%	1%
		Private	0%	0%	35%	65%
62	My school prepared me well for my academic studies at university.	Public	1%	54%	41%	4%
		Private	0%	2%	16%	82%

The majority of private school students strongly agreed that they were advised by their schools on what college would have been suitable for them, while more than the half of public school did not agree at all. In the same context, 98% of private school students indicated that they took the advice of their schools into consideration when deciding what course to take at university whereas only 17% of public school reported so.

99% of private school students found the subject knowledge they learnt at school helpful when they had started their studies at university, only 51% of public school students agreed that the subject knowledge they learnt at school had helped them at the beginning of their studies. Consistent with their responses to other statements, while only 45% of the public school students in my survey agreed that they were well prepared by their schools for their academic studies at university, 98% of private school students believed so.

✦ **Fifth null hypothesis:** There are no statistical significant differences between private and public schools in the extent to which they prepared their

students for university. In order to examine this hypothesis Independent Sample t-test was used; Table 6.16 shows the relevant results:

Table No (6.16) Independent Samples t- test results revealing the impact of education system on students' preparation for university.

Education system	N	Mean	T	Sig.
Private schools	63	3.58	1.33	0.00
Public schools	139	2.25		

Table 6.16 presents the result of t-test of students' preparation for university according to the education system; the means for private and public school participants' responses were compared to determine if there were any differences in the means that could be explained by the education system. The results indicated that there are statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) in the way private and public schools prepared their students for university. Therefore, the null hypothesis, H05, is rejected for the sample while the alternative hypothesis, H5, is supported. It can be observed that the mean of private school graduates is higher than the mean of public school graduates. Thus, it can be concluded that private school students believe that they were prepared by their schools for university better than public school.

6.3.2.6 Summary of the students' questionnaire

Although the interviews had not identified any major differences between the views of students from public and private schools in relation to their secondary school experiences and how it had prepared them for university, the much larger sample accessed through the questionnaire survey has led to the identification of significant differences across a whole range of measures.

In terms of school leadership, private schools were perceived as more effective than public schools. According to the perceptions of the participants, and unlike private schools, the school management of public schools appeared to have lacked a clear vision of what they were seeking to achieve for their students. The school managements of private schools were considered to be more helpful than those of public schools in achieving their students' potential. The school management of public schools did not seem to have focused on their students' learning, while those of private schools did.

Private schools were also considered to be more effective than public schools in terms of teachers and the quality of teaching. In comparison with public school teachers, teachers of private schools appeared to have provided their students with higher levels of academic support. The teachers of private schools were also perceived by the respondents to be more effective in relation to the extent to which they accommodate the individual learning styles of their students. It seemed that most of public school participants had felt the need to employ private tutors to compensate for the lack of quality of teaching at their schools.

There was also evidence of significant differences between public and private schools in terms of assessment, feedback and monitoring. Private schools

appeared to have considered oral and written feedback while public schools seemed to have mostly been content with providing their students with written feedback only. Unlike private schools, the feedback of public schools was not usually helpful. According to the respondents, private schools were found to have tracked their students' academic progress more effectively than their counterparts of public schools.

Private school students have higher family income than public school students. Therefore, it could simply be that higher income families can more easily afford private education. Parents of private school students had more involvement with their children's academic progress than those of public schools. Yet, private school students would have liked it if their parents had had less involvement. In contrast, public school students would have liked more parental involvement.

According to the respondents' perceptions, it can be said that private schools prepared their students for university more effectively than public schools. Private schools appeared to have advised their students on what course they should have taken at university, whereas this did not seem to have been one of the public school services. Also, private schools were found to have focused on equipping their students with the knowledge and the skills needed for academic success at university more effectively than public schools.

However, there is still an important question that has to be addressed; what is the nature of the relationship between the five components of the questionnaire namely the school leadership, the quality of teaching, school assessment and feedback, parental involvement and preparation for university? The answer to this question is presented in the next sub-section.

6.3.2.7 Correlation between the five components of the questionnaire

In order to investigate the relationship between the five components of the questionnaire, Pearson's product-moment correlation test was used. This analysis (Table 6.17) revealed that all the components of the questionnaire were statistically correlated with each other at the level of (0.01). Therefore, the null hypothesis, H06, is rejected for the sample while the alternative hypothesis, H6, is supported.

Table (6.17) Correlation between mean scores of the five components of the questionnaire

	Teachers and the quality of teaching	Assessment, feedback and monitoring	School leadership	Parental involvement	Preparation for university
Teachers and the quality of teaching	1	0.874	0.868	0.745	0.804
Assessment, feedback and monitoring	0.874	1	0.907	0.806	0.882
School leadership	0.868	0.907	1	0.827	0.903
Parental involvement	0.745	0.806	0.827	1	0.777
Preparation for university	0.804	0.882	0.903	0.777	1

It can be observed that there were large significant positive correlations between all the components of the questionnaire. Yet, the highest correlation was between the component of "school leadership" and the component of

"Assessment, feedback and monitoring" (r = 0.907, p<. 01). Indeed, effective school leadership is likely to pay a great attention to monitoring the attainment.

The lowest correlation, but still quite high, was between the component of "parental involvement" and the component of "Teachers and the quality of teaching" (r = 0.745, p<. 01). It is likely that the more parental involvement, the more the teachers are motivated to provide the students with teaching of high quality.

Preparation for university was found to have a high correlation with "School leadership" (r = 0.903, p<. 01). This is an expected result as school leadership was fairly always identified in the school effectiveness literature to be an aspect of effective schools. Parental involvement, however, was found to have the lowest correlation, but still quite high (r = 0.777, p<. 01), with university preparation compared to the other components and this might be due to the fact that parental involvement is an outer dimension of schools while the others are within school factors.

Thus, it can be considered that all the four components of the questionnaire are factors that have an impact upon university preparation. Based on the strength of their correlation with students' preparation for university, these factors are classified below:

1. School leadership.

2. Assessment, feedback and monitoring.

3. Teachers and the quality of teaching.

4. Parental involvement.

6.4 Conclusion

As demonstrated earlier, statistically significant differences were found between the responses of public and private school students in the five components of the questionnaire, namely "School leadership", "Teachers and the quality of teaching", "Assessment, feedback and monitoring", "Parental involvement" and "Preparation for university". Since all these statistical differences were in favour of private schools; it can be argued that these five factors contribute to the academic superiority of private school students at Kuwait University. Also, these five factors were found to statistically correlate with each other.

However, and as mentioned in the methodology Chapter, in order to gain a deeper understanding of secondary school level factors which may have influenced the university attainment of public and private school students, this study explored not only the perceptions and experiences of university students but also of a sample of public and private school principals. The findings from the principals' interviews are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7: PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF SECONDARY SCHOOLING

7.1 Introduction

Having gathered data in relation to students' perceptions and experiences of their secondary schools, the next phase of my research comprised interviews with ten school principals who had been randomly chosen (five from public schools; five from private schools). Drawing on the analysis of the student data, the interviews with principals addressed the same five key areas as those addressed in the student interview and questionnaire survey but also, as set out below, included questions which sought some biographical details about each principal and questions which asked them what their school had been like when they had been first been appointed and whether they had made any changes. Following the structure of the principals' interview schedule, this chapter is organized as follows:

- ➢ Principals' professional profiles.

- ➢ School profile.

- ➢ School leadership and management.

- ➢ The characteristics of the teaching staff.

- ➢ The quality of teaching.

- ➢ Assessment, feedback, monitoring and support.

- ➢ Parental involvement.

- ➢ Preparation for university.

7.2 Principals' Professional Profiles

Table 7.1 sets out the professional profiles of the ten interviewed principals. The table presents the principals' school type, gender and years of experience, both as a principal and as a principal at their current school. It also sets out the in-service training programmes they had attended.

Table (7.1) Profiles of the principals

No.	Schooling System	Gender	Experience as a principal (years)	Experience as principal at current school	The focus of in-service training programmes in the last five years	Number of programmes attended
1	Public	Male	8	8	Training for principal role: 5 weeks	One
2	Public	Male	9	3	ICDL	One
3	Public	Female	4	4	None	None
4	Public	Male	First year	First year	Training for principal role: 5 weeks	One
5	Public	Female	3	3	Training for principal role: 5 weeks	One
6	Private	Male	16	3	Educational leadership – oversees programmes.	Many
7	Private	Male	8	5	Educational leadership - educational psychology.	Many
8	Private	Female	3	3	Not mentioned.	Many
9	Private	Female	11	4	Educational leadership.	Many
10	Private	Female	14	4	Educational leadership - computer skills.	Many

Noticeably, private school principals have received more in-service training than public school principals, despite the programmes private school principals attended being optional whereas those of public school principals were compulsory for new principals.

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7.3 School profile

7.3.1 The current 'mission' of the school

The principals were asked about their school's mission. Each public school principal indicated that the Ministry of Education dictates their school mission and this relates to producing citizens with a strong adherence to the law and to Islamic culture. One public school principal's response exemplifies that of the other principals:

> *"My school mission is to achieve the goals of the Ministry of Education and although there are many, they can be summarized in one: the school mission is to prepare the students to be good members of their society, by following the laws and our Islamic and cultural rules."*

In contrast, three private school principals indicated that their key school mission was the academic development and achievement of individuals, to prepare students for higher education, although two principals also referred to the social development of their students.

Unlike public school principals, the tone of private school principals suggested a high level of concern in relation to sending as great a percentage of their students on to higher education as possible. It is therefore expected that the percentage of private school students who go on to higher education is greater than those of public schools. According to their answers to a different question, some private school principals indicated that they measure their school's performance by the percentage of students progressing onto university.

7.2.3 School on arrival

Each principal was asked for their initial impressions of their school when they first took up the post of principal. Two public school principals indicated that

their school's physical and learning environment was rather poor on their arrival. One principal said:

> *"The school was very dirty and everybody was careless… rubbish everywhere… dirty walls and floors, no garden…"*

"Staff hostility" to the new principal was indicated by one public school principal. The reason for this, he suggested, was because *"the teachers had been loyal to their ex-principal and one of their current principal assistants"*. Two public school principals reported the abuse of power by some teachers in their relationship with students. For example, one public school principal stated, *"most of the non-Kuwaiti teachers are not collaborative… they also used to force the students by misusing the marking to take them as private tutors"*. Only one public school principal indicated that his school was excellent on his arrival; he also described the school staff as cooperative and effective.

Three private school principals indicated that their school's physical and learning environment had been excellent when they arrived and that the existing teaching staff had been welcoming. Also, three principals said that the teaching at their school had been excellent and students had also been academically excellent. Only one private school principal cited any concern and she had felt that there needed to be more of a balance between academic and social priorities, stating:

> *"The school was only focusing on the academic dimension and paid no attention to the [students'] morale. They also participated in no activities outside their building as if they were alone on this planet. However, they were and still are academically excellent."*

In general, the initial impressions of private school principals of their schools sounded more positive compared to their counterparts from public ones.

7.2.4 School improvement strategies

Two public school principals had not implemented major changes in their schools on arrival, reporting that their schools had already been *"OK"*. A further two indicated improvements to the physical environment had been required. Underperforming or 'problematic' staff was cited by two principals as needing attention. Two principals employed rewards as incentives to improve performance. Some public school principals used punishments or transferred incompetent or problematic teachers to other schools. It is notable that, in their answers to this question, none of the five public school principals explicitly referred to raising the academic attainment of their students as one of their school improvement targets.

Except for two private school principals who had undertaken measures to improve the physical environment of their school, the focus of the changes in private schools appeared to have been different compared to those of public schools. The concern of two private school principals had been to improve the teacher/student ratio and to raise levels of academic achievement. This was seen as important in enabling the school to compete more effectively with other schools, as the following comment from one private school principal illustrates:

> *"I increased the number of teachers and decreased the number of the students so that we could compete with other schools. Although the school was excellent, as I told you, the quality of our teaching was to some degree affected by the teacher and student numbers."*

Three private school principals said a key change had been the updating of textbooks:

> *"I am still working on the plan I set three years ago. Some textbooks still need changing to ones that are able to keep pace with what students really need after graduation in this era. The textbooks I changed were excellent, but not for this era."*

Private school

Two of these three principals arranged in-school training programmes to familiarize teachers with the new textbooks.

Only one of the private school principals referred to bringing about any change to the ethos of their school. She reported 'cultivating a more relaxed attitude' as the most important improvement strategy in her school. This, she claimed, made the students happier and did not affect their excellent academic attainment:

> *"I tried hard to change the school culture to be more attractive by changing their extreme seriousness and participating in activities with other schools, and I found that they liked the school more and I think they are happier now as well as being great at their academic achievement."*

The principals were also asked whether they were making any changes in the current academic year. The two public school principals who had described their school, on arrival as, "OK", were not implementing any changes. One of them said: *"…I believe in stabilization, sometimes people think that making changes is always right but it is not always…"*. Two other public school principals indicated that their current school improvement programme included improving the physical environment, and for one, this comprised establishing a language laboratory and enlarging the sports hall. For the fifth public school principal, attention was focused on becoming a more successful school across a range of activities, including student sport and academic attainment. His success would be rewarded by the ministry, he reported.

Unlike their counterparts in public schools, the private school principals reported multiple on-going school improvement strategies. These included maintaining the school building, introducing e-learning, establishing school social networks, providing new sport facilities, establishing language labs, updating resources, enhancing the quality of teaching and competing with other schools.

> *"Every year I try to make some balance between the students' and teachers' numbers to enhance the quality of teaching. I will make some changes to the inside and outside look of the school to make it more attractive and comfortable. We will change the boards of the classes to electronic boards called 'smart boards'."*

Private school

> *"I have made major changes in the curricula. Employed new and highly qualified teachers. I also made some changes in the school environment to be more suitable for the new curricula. I gave some attention to arts because they had been considered unimportant… these are the major changes I have made so far, I guess."*

Private school

It appeared that public school principals spent a great deal of their time improving the physical environment of their schools and dealing with who they perceived to be problematic staff. On the other hand, and since private schools already had an effective environment and committed staff, the aspects of change the principals sought to achieve were more ambitious.

7.2.5 Relationship with other schools

The principals were asked about the nature of the relationship with other schools, if any. Three public school principals reported no relationship; two principals indicated that their relationships with other schools are based on

reciprocal collaboration, which they explained includes accepting new admissions from other schools and exchanging resources. One public school principal added that the nature of his school's relationship with others is 'competitive', rather than collaborative. He described his students competing against other schools in a wide range of activities such as *"sports, writing stories, science, acting and many others"*.

All private school principals indicated that their relationships with other schools are primarily competitive. Of the five private school principals, four indicated that competition helps them *"promote their schools"* to *"polarise students"*. According to three private school principals, not only they do compete with private schools but also public ones. However, and in the midst of this competition, two private school principals indicated that they sometimes collaborate with each other by sharing good practice:

> *"We exchange experience and teachers. Sometimes they have a very good teacher and we ask them to send them for us to work a half-day so that our teachers benefit from her experience, and we also do the same for them."*

Private school

Obviously, one can say that there are important differences between public and private schools in their relationships with each other. The relationship between public schools is likely to be collaborative whereas between private schools it is mostly based on competition. There is evidence from studies undertaken in other countries that relationships between schools that are based on competition may result in improving students' academic achievement. In the next Chapter, I discuss this further.

7.3 School Leadership

Of the five public school principals, four appeared to follow no specific leadership model and their responses to my question revealed a very narrow view of leadership.

> *"There is no particular style I follow, sometimes I find myself having to punish, and others I reward, it also depends on the person you are dealing with. But in general I like rewarding people and I hate punishing others."*

Public school

Indeed, two of these four principals referred to using rewards and punishments tailored to individual members of staff, while the other two expressed their personal preference for rewarding.

One public school principal who had been in post for only three months said that he advocated an approach called "Total Quality Management". According to him, the advantage of the TQM approach is that it emphasizes creating a positive culture towards achieving the educational goals alongside an emphasis on the happiness of teachers, students and their parents. However, his answer to an earlier question suggests that he had not yet applied this approach in reality, as he states:

> *"I have not decided yet. I am still a new principal and I do not want to do anything then regret doing it. I need to practise… I need to get used to the basic functions of a principal then change will definitely happen… I mean, I do not want to rush."*

Of the five private school principals, four claimed that they employed a democratic style although three of them admitted the necessity to be autocratic in some cases. One private school principal appeared to have no specific leadership style, as according to her, she was fluctuating between being democrat and autocrat.

"I would like to be a democrat as this concurs with my own personality but unfortunately I am facing some problems regarding my plans and this makes me act dictatorially sometimes. I am sure when my plan is achieved I will return to my natural tendency… being a democrat I mean."

The principals of both public and private schools reported that the Ministry of Education had no influence whatsoever on how they managed their school. However, this contradicted what had been said by two public school principals in earlier questions in which they admitted their desire to obtain rewards from the Ministry.

As mentioned above, public school principals described themselves as having no specific leadership style, whereas private school principals, as they perceived it, tend to be democratic. Yet, the responses of public and private school principals can be refuted. This will be discussed in Chapter 8.

7.3.1 Core functions of principals

The principals were asked about the functions and responsibilities of a principal. All public school principals indicated that their primary responsibility is to supervise the school weekly plan, which includes, among other things, monitoring the teachers' performance, curricula coverage, examination affairs and absenteeism. All also reported that they undertake lesson observations on a weekly basis to monitor the quality of teaching. Two public school principals also described the process of "distributing roles" to the staff to be one of their core functions as principals.

Like their public school counterparts, all private school principals supervise the school weekly plan. "Choosing the suitable curricula" was regarded by three private school principals as one of their core functions. In addition, they are all

responsible for recruiting new staff applicants. Two indicated that they like "meeting students' parents" themselves. Regarding the students, three private school principals reported monitoring the students' academic attainment and providing them with support as one of their primary functions.

The core functions of public school principals seemed to be only supervision (overseeing staffs' tasks) and lesson observation. Private school principals, on the other hand, seemed to hold all the responsibilities in their schools. Indeed, two private school principals stated, *"I am responsible for everything in this school".* Being responsible for everything has an echo with the increased autonomy private school principals enjoy as leaders (see Chapter 2), and I will argue in Chapter 8 that this autonomy might have a link with their students' academic success at university.

7.3.2 Delegation of principals' power

The issue of the extent to which principals delegate power to their staff was addressed. Only one public school principal reported that she does not delegate her power to her staff. On the contrary, two public school principals indicated that they delegate all their responsibilities to their staff.

"I do not hold any responsibilities as I have delegated everything [except supervision] to the two deputies and they are responsible for everything, one of them is responsible for teachers and the other is responsible for students. And I on my part advised them to delegate some of their responsibilities to head of departments; as you might know, people are often eager to hold power."

Public school

Three public school principals explained that they delegate some of their power, as a reward, to those who seek to hold it. Two public school principals indicated that they delegated some of their responsibilities to teachers because their teachers had some free time. One public school principal reported that he delegated a great deal of his responsibilities to teachers to keep them too busy to gang up on him as a new principal. Also, according to one public school principal, some teachers do not wish to hold power *"some [teachers] prefer obtaining merit certificates as a reward"*, she said.

Only one private school principal was found to delegate all her powers except supervision, the other four private school principals responded that they do not delegate any. Three of the private school principals who do not delegate any of their power believe that their staff has enough of their own responsibilities and would resist taking on more management duties.

It has to be mentioned here that the responses of private school principals to this question to some extent contradict their description of their leadership style in an earlier question, as democratic. However, it might be that they do not regard delegation of power as a condition of democratic leadership.

7.3.3 Promotion of collaborative working

Four public school principals suggested that rewarding collaborative staff (positive reinforcement) is the primary policy to promote collaboration amongst their staff. Three public school principals indicated that *"power sharing"* is also a useful method to promote collaborative working. Interestingly, *"punishment for those who don't collaborate"* was found to be a policy used by one public school principal.

Only one private school principal reported that she promotes collaborative working by "power sharing". Using only positive reinforcement was found by four private school principals to be a helpful policy to promote collaborative working. An interesting observation was that one private school principal regarded rewarding staff *"fairly"* as the most effective way to promote a collaborative culture among her staff.

Yet, no important differences were found between public and private school principals' responses in this regard as both public and private school principals promoted collaborative working by using positive reinforcement. However, sharing power with staff was also a way of promoting collaboration although, and unlike in public schools, this policy does not seem to be widely used in private schools. Nonetheless, and because no clear differences were found between the responses of public and private school principals to this question, "promotion of collaborative working" should not be considered as one of the possible factors to which the academic superiority of private school students can be attributed.

7.3.4 Teacher involvement in decision-making

The principals elaborated on the extent to which teachers were involved in decision-making in school. In one public school teachers are involved directly, in the other four, teachers are involved only indirectly in the process of decision-making. According to these principals, teachers can submit suggestions and/or recommendations to their head of department who conveys them to the principal but this does not mean that these suggestions and recommendations will necessarily be taken into consideration.

> *"To some extent they are involved… I mean they are involved indirectly. There is a staff meeting, which is held weekly, and they give some suggestions or recommendations and some of these are worth considering."*

Public school

Three private school principals, on the other hand, reported that teachers are involved in decision-making directly. According to them, not only can they make suggestions and recommendations, but also they can criticise the principals themselves.

> *"They are completely involved… teachers can submit suggestions directly to me and they know that they are welcome to criticise any procedure… after all they are the ones who will carry out decisions so the decision should be theirs."*

Private school

One private school principal responded that only experienced teachers are involved in decision-making. Another private school principal said that teachers are welcome to make suggestions only when it comes to teachers' affairs, and they are never involved if the decision is related to other affairs *"such as students' affairs and dismissing or recruiting a new employee"*.

Overall, in public schools, teachers are likely to be indirectly involved in the process of decision-making. By contrast, teachers in private schools can be said to be more involved and have greater say in decision-making. It might follow that the greater teacher involvement in decision-making, the more likely it is to be an effective school (see Chapter 3).

7.3.5 Teacher autonomy

Two public school principals reported that they give teachers a great deal of autonomy in the classroom provided that they achieve the educational goals set by the Ministry of Education. Three public school principals indicated that autonomy should not be given to new teachers. The response of one public school principal suggested that although she encourages giving teachers autonomy, she admits that only heads of teachers' departments are responsible for such a strategy and they can make their own judgment of to whom and to what extent autonomy can be given.

> *"Well… it depends on their head of department who alone can decide the extent to which a teacher should have autonomy. But in general and although I do not interfere, I encourage them to give teachers a great deal of autonomy."*

Public school

Four private school principals, on the other hand, responded that their schoolteachers are autonomous. However, and like public school principals, the autonomy given to teachers is conditional on achieving the educational goals. Also, three private school principal indicated that new teachers are not given autonomy.

7.4 The Characteristics of the Teaching Staff

7.4.1 Characteristics of an effective teacher

Tables 7.2 and 7.3 set out the characteristics of an effective teacher according to the responses of both public and private school principals. These categories were generated from the answers of the principals to an open question and the frequencies show the number of principals who mentioned the topic.

Table (7.2) Pedagogical characteristics of an effective teacher according to the principals.

Pedagogical Characteristics	Public school principal	Private school principal	Total
Sound subject knowledge	4	3	7
Positive attitudes towards teaching	2	4	6
Meeting educational targets	2	2	4
Knowledge of psychology	1	2	3
Ability to extend prescribed curriculum	1	2	3
Teaching and expecting critical thinking by students	1	2	3
Learning guider rather than a teacher	0	3	3
Motivating	1	2	3
Effective classroom management	0	3	3
Good role model	2	0	2

Table (7.3) Personal characteristics of an effective teacher

according to the principals.

Personal Characteristics	Public school principal	Private school principal	Total
Patient	2	2	4
Commitment	2	2	4
Knowledgeable	3	0	3
Merciful	1	1	2
Collaborative	2	0	2
Punctual	2	0	2

According to the principals, sound subject knowledge seemed to be the most important characteristic of an effective teacher as this was mentioned by seven public and private school principals. Of the ten principals interviewed, six indicated that an effective teacher should have positive attitudes towards

 teaching but only two of these were public school principals. As for the personal characteristics of an effective teacher, "commitment" and "patience" appeared to be the most important.

There were some characteristics that were mentioned only by public school principals: "good role model", "collaborative", "punctual" and "knowledgeable". On the other hand, two characteristics were only mentioned by private school principals: "effective classroom management" and "learning guider rather than a teacher".

One significant finding in this section of the interview was that, while three private school principals indicated that an effective teacher should be a "learning guider rather than teacher" to create a culture of independent learning, none of the public school principals indicated this. In their answers to a different question, three private school principals considered "independent learning" as an important characteristic that is required for academic success at university. This may indicate a link to why private school students are academically better at university, as I will elaborate in Chapter 8.

7.4.2 Teachers' qualifications and experience

None of the public school principals interviewed were ever involved in teacher recruitment processes, having to accept whichever teachers were sent to them by the Ministry of Education. The ministry requires that Kuwaiti applicants must only have a Bachelor degree. Non-Kuwaitis have to pass an interview in addition to having a BA with merit.

All the private school principals were responsible for teacher recruitment. According to them, a teacher has to have a Bachelor (set by the Ministry). In addition, a candidate must pass an interview. Three private school principals indicated that they would prefer a teacher who has a Master of Art. Knowledge of information technology (IT) was seen by two private school principals as a highly desirable attribute.

The principals of public and private schools were asked whether they require a teacher to have a minimum amount of experience. Public school principals indicated that no minimum years of experience are required. In contrast, all private school principals said that they would prefer an experienced teacher (preferably with five years or more experience).

This suggests that private school teachers tend to have more experience at the time of appointment as well as having higher qualifications compared to public school teachers. Given that all public and private school principals believed that there is a positive correlation between the quality of teaching and a teacher's years of experience, one might draw the conclusion that the quality of teaching of private school teachers is better as they are more experienced. Indeed, while most public school principals described the quality of teaching of their teachers

as "good", all private school principals regarded their teachers' quality of teaching as "excellent".

7.4.3 Teacher in-service training

In-service training programmes for teaching staff were reported as very rare in the public sector:

> *"Unfortunately the Ministry is very weak in this regard, there are hardly any and if they did it would be for the benefit of the organizers of the programmes and not for the teachers as the organizers get paid by the Ministry."*
>
> **Public school**

The principals were asked whether in-service programmes have an impact upon teachers' quality of teaching. Although some of the public school principals admitted having no evidence, they said they believed that in-service programmes should enhance the quality of teaching.

Four of the private school principals reported that they usually organize their own in-school training programmes. These programmes are currently mainly about using information and communications technology (ICT). Interestingly, two private school principals mentioned that some of these in-school programmes are meant to teach the staff how they can give feedback to students and their parents using ICT. Regarding the impact of in-service programmes upon teachers' quality of teaching, all private school principals answered that there is a positive relationship as they had noticed improvements in the teachers' performance after attending in-service programmes.

7.4.4 Teacher salaries

Public school principals reported that Kuwaiti teachers are paid much higher than non-Kuwaitis. While the starting salary of Kuwaiti teachers is approximately 1250 KD per month (2700 GBP), the average starting salary of non-Kuwaitis is 450 KD per month (1000 GBP). On the other hand, and according to the private school principals, the approximate starting salary of private school teachers is 500 KD per month (1100 GBP).

Two public school principals believed that higher pay does not necessarily result in a better quality of teaching. To support this claim, one public school principal said that non-Kuwaiti teachers are *"paid less and they are famous for being more effective compared to Kuwaiti teachers".* Another public school principal argued, too, that private school teachers are more effective though they are paid less. Not all agreed, though. Three public school principals believed there to be a positive correlation between higher pay and the quality of teaching, considering higher pay as a motivating factor. All private school principals believed there to be a positive relationship between higher pay and teachers' quality of teaching and two of them indicated that they would like to increase their teachers' pay.

Two principals (one public and one private) indicated that, although it is against the law in Kuwait, many teachers work after school as private tutors to compensate for their low salaries. Asked why working as a private tutor is illegal, the answer of one of them exemplified that of the other; *"teachers might force the students to take them as private tutors by hindering their progress [in the classroom]".*

Although most of the interviewed principals agreed that higher pay is motivating, private school teachers' pay was found to be significantly lower than that of public school teachers. Given that the private school students in my study outperformed public school students in their academic achievement, the results of my study do not support the existence of any direct relationship between teachers' pay and students' academic achievement. However, it might be the greater power of private school principals compared to their counterparts in public schools in the ability to dismiss lax teachers, which can account for this unexpected finding.

7.5 Teachers and Teaching

7.5.1 Teaching quality

In describing the quality of teaching in their schools, two public school principals responded that the quality of teaching in their schools is "excellent". One public school principal described the quality of teaching in his school as "very good especially in Science". Two public school principals said that the quality of teaching at their school is "good". On the other hand, all private school principals reported that the quality of teaching at their schools is "excellent". The responses to other questions in the interview schedule shed more light on the quality of teaching in the two systems.

7.5.2 Monitoring the quality of teaching

The primary method for monitoring the quality of teaching in public schools, - and in three cases, the only method - is lesson observation. According to them, they visit each teacher in school at classes between 3 to 4 times annually. Two

public school principals indicated that they also consider *"having a look"* at the students' attainment results as a method in monitoring the quality of teaching.

Each private school principal scrutinised students' examination results as the primary resource of information about the quality of teaching in their schools. Although two private school principals added that they also do lesson observations, two private school principals said that there is no need for this strategy.

> *"Yes I do, I watch the students' progress, you do not have to bother to visit teachers because even if they were bad teachers they would pretend to be very active if you did… just stay and await the results… numbers tell everything… I mean by numbers the results of the examinations and the students' assessment from their teachers."*

Private school

An important notice was that two private school principals reported that students' and parents' feedback is also a strategy to be reckoned with in monitoring the quality of teaching.

Public school principals were found to be mainly content with lesson observation as a method of monitoring the quality of teaching in their schools. Private school principals, on the other hand, appeared to adopt a more comprehensive approach. Although some private school principals followed the method of monitoring the quality of teaching through lesson observation, they all seemed to place a greater emphasis on the learning outcomes. These outcomes not only included the students' examinations results, but also the feedback provided to the school by both the students and their parents.

The principals also explained how teachers' performance is assessed. All public school principals reported that they assess teacher's work twice annually.

Although most of them appeared to have no understanding of the term, or indeed the concept of "formative assessment", the first assessment is formative (in words) and aims to improve the performance and the second is summative and written in final numbers. Teachers are assessed using a form by the Ministry of Education, which is filled in by the principal, the teacher's supervisor and the teacher's head of department.

> "*I assess them with the assistance of the teacher's supervisor who visits teachers a couple of times every term, and the head of the teacher's department also has his word in assessing teachers but he is only responsible of 20% of the assessment while the other 80% is divided between me and the supervisor (40% for the supervisors and 40% for the principal).*"

Public school

According to two public school principals, the ministry form has sections on the managerial duties, the pedagogical performance and the extent to which a teacher is collaborative. Noticeably, none of the public school principals interviewed indicated whether students' academic attainment is an issue to be addressed in the teachers' annual assessment.

All private school principals reported that they, too, assess their teachers' work twice annually, the first assessment is formative and written in words, and the second is a numerical summative assessment. However, four private school principals indicated that their assessment form mainly consisted of points that describe the teaching outcomes rather than the teaching itself. According to one private school principal, these outcomes include the students' results, satisfaction of students and their parents and the teacher in-school relationships. According to them, both the students and their parents fill in questionnaires to give feedback to the school about its performance.

Both public and private schools give feedback to their teachers twice annually on the quality of their teaching. Consistent with their pragmatic approach, the points of private school teachers' assessments are mainly related to the teaching outcomes whereas those of public schools emphasise the pedagogy and the process of teaching itself.

Three parties are involved in public school teachers' assessment, and responsible for filling in the Ministry's form: the principal, the teacher's supervisor and the teacher's head of department. On the other hand, it is likely that only the school principal assesses their teachers in private schools, which suggests the greater power of private school principals compared to public school principals. This greater power may also lead the teachers to adopt their principal's educational philosophy that could contribute to creating a collective social identity as a leadership style –as I will discuss in Chapter 8.

Neither public nor private school principals mentioned the procedures they follow in the case of under-performing teachers being detected. However, the tone of private school principals suggested that they would dismiss under-performing teachers and recruit new ones.

7.5.3 Teacher-student relationships

The responses of two public school principals suggested that the nature of the relationships between their teachers and students is excellent; there were *"no complaints",* one public school principal said. According to another two public school principals, it is the teacher who determines the nature of the relationship between themselves and their students, although one of them said that he would encourage wise informal relationships:

"You cannot determine the nature of the relationships between teachers and students. Some of them tend to be formal while others don't. On my part, I encourage informal relationships as long as students are treated wisely."

Two private school principals indicated that the nature of the relationships between their teachers and students is *"excellent"* and another two described it as *"normal"*. One private school principal reported that the relationships between their teachers and students depend on the personality of the teachers. It might be that teachers in private schools have to handle their students with care since they pay money for the education service while this is not the case in public schools.

7.5.4 Teacher workload

Teacher workload was an issue of significant differences between public and private schools. The responses of public school principals suggested that teachers' workloads range from five to ten lessons weekly. According to private school principals, private school teachers work between ten and fifteen lessons per week.

Two public school principals believed that the teacher workload should be greater (e.g. 10 - 12 lessons per week, each lasting 45 minutes). One of these two principals said that a greater workload would *"keep teachers busy and they won't have time for staff politics* [against the principal]". The other said, *"Teachers are free most of the time and have nothing else to do"*. By contrast, three public school principals said that the workload of teachers is appropriate; *"if greater it would affect performance"* one said.

On the other hand, all private school principals agreed that the teacher workload at their schools is appropriate: *"if less, we would require more teachers,"* a private school principal said.

Thus, teacher workload was another area where differences emerged between public and private schools. In public schools, the average teachers' workload is seven lessons weekly while in private schools teachers' workload can reach 15 lessons weekly (three lessons daily). One would assume that the greater the number of lessons, the more negative effect on the teachers' performance. However, the data from my study challenges this position. Although the workload of private school teachers appears to be higher than those in public schools, levels of academic attainment amongst the students in private schools were higher than those in public ones. Part of the explanation may lie with the class sizes in the two different types of school as discussed below.

7.5.5 Average class size

The principals were asked about the average class size at their school and whether the school or the Ministry of Education determines this average. All public school principals reported that the ministry determines a maximum of 25 students although this target does not always seem to be met.

> *"The class size must be a maximum of 25 students and the ministry sets this and we do our best to achieve this target although sometimes this is impossible. For example, I was able to reduce the class size to 22 on average in the 11th grade while the best thing we could reach for the 10th is about 29 … the ministry asks us to make the number 25 and at the same time there is a shortage of some teachers of some subjects, which is science mostly!"*

Public school

On the other hand, private school principals' target is 20 students per class. Based on the principals' responses, this target (20 students) is mostly achieved.

It would follow that the smaller the class size the more the students' potential (see Chapter 3). In my study, the average class size in public schools was found to be 25 students whereas it was only 20 students in private schools. This means the difference between the class sizes in the two systems is 20%. Thus, it might be that the smaller class sizes of private schools compared with those of public schools are a conducive factor in providing private school students with more individualized and higher quality of teaching than those of public ones. Consequently, the smaller class sizes in private schools can be considered as a characteristic that might account for the academic superiority of private school students when they progress to university.

7.5.6 Grade allocation of teachers

Echoing what the Kuwait university students interviewed had said, the public school principals confirmed that they allocated the best teachers to Grade 12, so that the students could be well prepared for the final national examinations. One public school principal said: *"Their future depends on these examinations"*.

Two private school principals indicated that they did not allocate their best teachers in a particular grade, although three private school principals indicated that they allocated their best teachers in Grade 10, so that the teachers could familiarise the students to the new schooling level, namely secondary schooling.

The reason why private school principals did not appear to allocate their best teachers in Grade 12 might be that most private school students do not enter

the national examinations as the majority of private schools (non-Arabic private schools) conduct their own examinations.

As discussed above, public school principals attributed the strategy of allocating their best teachers in Grade 12 to the importance of this grade as the national examinations are held at the end of the 12th year. According to public school principals, the results of these national examinations determine the future of the students. The responses of public school principals contradict what they answered in a different question. As discussed earlier in this chapter, public school principals said that the mission of their schools is not to prepare the students especially for "university," but to prepare them for "life".

7.6 Assessment, feedback, monitoring and support

7.6.1 Assessment

The public school principals indicated that their students are assessed mainly by exams. The answer of one of them exemplifies those of the others:

> *"They are assessed by the examinations that are held every five weeks. The teachers also assess homework and schoolwork but these include approximately 25% of their final mark; this is for the 10th and 11th grades, and for the 12th only 10% is for homework and coursework and the rest is for the examinations."*
>
> **Public school**

Likewise, private school principals indicated that the main assessment method is the examinations. However, and according to private school principals, it was found that students from only two private schools – out of five schools - enter the national examinations, while the other three schools use their own examinations.

7.6.2 Feedback

All public school principals indicated that students are provided with written, summative feedback four times annually. None of the public school principals appeared to supply the students with formative feedback. In fact, two public school principals said that they had no understanding of the concept of formative feedback. Also, all public school principals reported no official oral feedback, although one of them added, *"it depends on the teacher whether or not there is oral feedback"*.

In contrast, all private school principals reported giving oral and written feedback to students on their academic attainment. Furthermore, they all reported both formative and summative feedback being used. Four private school principals email the students' parents to give them feedback about their children's academic attainment.

7.6.3 Student knowledge of assessment types and criteria

All the public and private school principals interviewed indicated that their students should understand how their work would be assessed, whether by coursework, homework or tests. According to public school principals, their students' academic work is mainly assessed by the examinations held quarterly. Three of the public school principals indicated that there is no need to inform the students about the assessment through examination because it is common knowledge.

> *"They all know that they have to succeed in the exams and there is no need for telling them what to do because all of them know that we do these exams every five weeks, the same as they used to do when they were at intermediate schools, so there is no difference.*

However, we give them the timetable of the exams one week before we conduct them"

Public school

On the other hand, four private school principals reported providing the students with instructions for each piece of work - whether classwork, homework, practical experiments, etc. - explaining what they are expected to do, in order that it may then be assessed.

Consequently, student understanding of what is required to do well in an assignment/assessment can be said to be an issue of difference between public and private schools. Public schools seemed to give their students no detailed information about the way their work will be assessed, which is mainly by exams. On the other hand, private schools appeared to supply their students with detailed instructions about the schoolwork and what they are expected to do for each task.

7.6.4 Academic support for students

How would students be supported if they were struggling with their studies was a question posed to the principals. Three public school principals reported the availability of teacher help. Two public school principals said, *"There are evening classes"* which any student can join. Three public school principals indicated that families prefer to employ private tutors for their children if they are struggling with their studies. Indeed, one public school principal said that he uses private tutors for his own children.

Private school principals, on the other hand, indicated that their support to the students is "unlimited," no matter whether the student is struggling with their

studies or not. Indeed, two private school principals said, "Help is mandatory" if the student was struggling. According to them, if a student refuses to receive support, their parents are notified, to get their reaction. And if the parents *"let the principal down"*, the principal would ask the parents to take their child to another school. Nevertheless, how the students are supported in private schools was not clear in the private school principals' responses although two of them indicated the existence of evening classes.

As stated above, while private schools were found to provide the individual students with support when they find a student struggling with their studies, most of the students of public schools would prefer parents to employ private tutors in such a case. The reason why public school students take private tutors may be because of the lack of the individualised support in their schools (see Chapter 6).

7.6.5 Expectations of students

In response to a question about the principals' expectation for their students at the end of their time in school, one public school principal's answer exemplifies those of the other public school principals:

> *"I expect them to achieve at least 50% of the main educational goal set by the ministry of education."*
>
> **Public school**

Indeed, all public school principals mentioned phrases that are compatible with the end of the educational goals, which are set by the Ministry of Education. For example, *"I expect them to be good citizens, to the maximum of their abilities,"* a

male public school principal said; and *"I expect them to contribute to the improvement of their country,"* a female public school principal said.

On the other hand, all private school principals agreed that they expect their students to be able to gain entry to the university college they wanted. Moreover, two private school principals added that they expect their students to succeed at university.

The answers of both private and public principals to this question are consistent with their responses on their schools' mission discussed earlier in this chapter.

Most of the lists of the characteristics of school effectiveness include high expectations by schools of their students (see Chapter 3). Private schools' expectations of their students can be said to be more ambitious than public schools. Not only do private schools expect their students to get to university, but also to succeed there. In public schools there appears to be less emphasis on academic achievement. The public schools in this study expected their students to be good citizens by adhering to the Islamic and cultural rules of the state of Kuwait. Entering and succeeding at university do not conflict with being a good citizen, Indeed, in addition to university entry, some private school principals also emphasized that they expect their students to be good citizens and to contribute to the development of their country.

The contexts in which public and private schools discussed their expectations of their students was also an area of notable difference. Public schools were found to discuss their expectations of their students in their weekly meetings although these meetings are not primarily held to discuss these expectations as they discuss all the issues related to the school, and their expectations of their

students were found to be occasionally included. In contrast, private schools were found to designate special meetings to discussing their expectations of their students.

One might say that private schools are more able logistically to conduct meetings to discuss their expectations of their students due to their smaller school size. However, looking back to the teachers' workload in private schools, this claim is easy to disprove, as the number of staff working in private schools is likely to be half that of public schools. So it would seem that the private schools' emphasis on discussing expectations is a step towards the achievement of those expectations.

7.6.6 Student motivation levels

Apart from one public school principal who believed that his students' motivation level was 'quite high', the other public school principals believed that their students' motivation levels were low. Two principals attributed this to a lack of involvement on the part of the students' parents. One principal pointed to the traditional role of women in Kuwaiti society and said that some female students are more interested in starting families rather than engaging with learning. The economic security and the guarantee of a job in the State of Kuwait was a reason given by two public school principals for the students' low motivation towards learning.

In contrast, all private school principals believe that their students are highly motivated and keen to engage with their learning. The principals' evidence of why they think this was that their students were able to fulfill what the school expected them to achieve.

One would wonder why private school students were more motivated in the first place. A possible answer to this question is that it might be that their parents had higher expectations of them compared with those of public students' parents. Since private school students at Kuwait University were found, in my study, to be higher achievers, it might be that private school students' parents have high expectations of their children, which in turn might result in their children's higher level of motivation.

7.6.6 Tracking students' academic progress

The principals were asked whether they tracked individual students' academic progress. All public school principals responded that their schools track students' academic progress, but not individually. They reported that it is impossible to track them individually due to the large size of their schools. According to their responses, public school principals divide the students into upper-achievers and lower-achievers, based on their examination results. Afterwards, they set plans to reinforce upper-achievers and enhance low-achievers.

In contrast, all private school principals reported that they do track individual students' academic progress. Each said that they hold detailed files for every student in school. A designated teacher (the student's mentor) and the principal discuss these files separately, with the presence of the parents in some cases. Each mentor is only responsible for ten students or so.

Unlike public school principals, private school principals reported two sorts of meetings in relation to the context of discussing the expectations of their students. Firstly, there are mentors whose responsibility is to meet with the

student's teachers to discuss the student's progress, as well as their expectations of every student. The mentors write notes in the student's files on the student's attainment and whether the mentor sees this attainment as satisfactory or not. Secondly, the mentors drew up progress plans for each individual student. These files are separately discussed with the principals in designated meetings.

7.7 Parental involvement

All the public school principals expressed their unhappiness with the low levels of parental involvement in their schools, believing parents' support to be very important.

In contrast, private school principals reported high levels of parental involvement, and they appreciated this. They also believed that parents' support is very important, if not the most important element, and their evidence was that they noticed a positive relationship between the students' academic attainment and the level of involvement of their parents.

The principals were asked whether it is important to satisfy the expectations of their students' parents. Two public school principals indicated that this was irrelevant if the parents themselves showed no interest in their children's education. They would like to satisfy them but would consider whether it is important or not depending on whether the parents were involved. *"Tell me where they are to satisfy or not satisfy them!"* one said. Three public school principals said that the satisfaction of students' parents is not important as they believe that satisfying students' educational needs is the most important priority,

and that the school and the students' parents should work together to achieve this.

> *"I think we both, parents and school, should satisfy the students' educational needs."*
>
> **Public school**

Unlike public school principals, all private school principals indicated that satisfying the expectations of students' parents is one of their primary goals. The response of two private school principals exemplified those of the others:

> *"Of course, we have to satisfy them. We are providers of an educational service and in every service you have to satisfy the receivers of the service."*

> *"We have to satisfy them because they chose us because they believed that we are able to satisfy them."*

7.8 Preparation for University

7.8.1 Percentage of university applicants

The principals interviewed were asked about the approximate percentage of their students who go to university, and whether or not they are happy with this percentage. According to the responses of public school principals, the percentage of their students who go to university ranges from 15% to 40%, and four of them were happy with this: *"the university can't accommodate all the students,"* a public school principal said. One public school principal expressed his dissatisfaction at his students' percentage (15%) as he thinks that it should be more.

The percentage of private school students who go to university is approximately more than 95% in the schools studied in this research, and all the principals were happy with this percentage.

In a different question, and unlike private school principals, public school principals clearly said that university entrance is not one of their primary goals. This being the case, it is not surprising that an average of less than 20% of public school graduates go to university. Still, the most important question of this study has not been answered yet, which is why private school graduates outperformed this much smaller percentage of public school students at university.

The principals were asked whether they had plans to increase the percentage of their students who go to university. All public school principals said that they had no plans to increase the percentage, while four of them were basically happy with the percentage; the fifth responded that he had no plans to increase it although he would if he could, because "*the national examinations are out of my control, sometimes they are very difficult,*" he said. None of the private school principals had plans to increase the percentage because the numbers gaining access to higher education were already very high. *"I can't make it 110%!"* a private school principal said.

7.8.2 Information, advice and guidance on university college selection

The principals were asked whether their schools advise or guide the students on which college or course they should attend at university. The responses of all public school principals suggested that they do not advise their students formally. Three public school principals indicated that the students do not need

their advice or guidance; *"they know what's best for themselves,"* a public school principal said.

Private school principals reported that they supply their students with information, advice and guidance on which college they should apply to at Kuwait University. According to three principals, the student shows their interest in some colleges (e.g. three colleges). Afterwards, and based on their academic abilities, the designated mentors discuss which college would be most suitable for them. Two private school principals indicated that they also conduct tests, and based on the results, the mentors discuss the suitability of different colleges. In addition, three private school principals reported taking their students on tours to universities *"to get the students familiarized with the new environment,"* one of them said.

This result is consistent with the missions of private and public schools. In other words, in public schools, and unlike private ones, there is not seen to be a need for providing the students with advice on which college should they apply to at university since it is not their primary mission to send their students there. Likewise, the lack of information, advice or guidance on university course selection might also be a factor that accounts for the low percentage of public school students who get to university.

7.8.3 Academic and personal skills for university

Tables 7.4 and 7.5 show the academic and personal skills that are necessary for success at university, according to the responses of both public and private school principals and the frequency with which each was mentioned.

Table (7.4) The academic skills necessary for success at university

Academic skills	Public school principal	Private school principal	Total
Use of resources	3	3	6
Research skills	2	4	6
Skills in Arabic	4	1	5
Academic writing	1	3	4
Critical thinking	2	2	4
Good command of mathematics	0	3	3
Independent learning.	0	3	3
Good command of English language	0	3	3
Subject specific knowledge	2	0	2
Computer skills	2	0	2

Table (7.5) The personal skills necessary for success at university

Personal skills	Public school principal	Private school principal	Total
Time management	2	2	4
Commitment	1	3	4
Patience	1	2	3

Determination	1	2	3
Stress management	3	0	3
Self-motivation	1	1	2
Ability to present an argument	0	2	2

According to the principals, research skills and the ability to use resources well seem to be the most important academic skills for success at university as they were mentioned by six public and private school principals. Out of ten principals, five indicated that students should have general study and learning skills in Arabic.

Based on the principals' responses, "commitment" and "time management" appeared to be the most important personal skills that the students should have for success at university.

There were three skills that were mentioned only by public school principals- "subject specific knowledge," "computer skills" and "stress management". Four skills were only mentioned by private school principals - "good command of mathematics," "independent learning," "good command of the English language," and "the ability to present an argument".

An important observation was that three public school principals added that they seek to develop the abovementioned skills for life and not especially for university. By contrast, all private school principals indicated that they seek to develop those skills especially for university.

The type of academic skills with which private schools seek to prepare their students for university may suggest a reason why private school students were found to outperform their counterparts from public schools at university. There were some important academic and personal skills that were mentioned by almost all private school principals, which no public school principal did.

7.8.4 School missions in relation to university entrance

The principals were asked whether preparing the students for university is an aim of their schools. All public school principals responded that university entrance is not a primary goal of public schools. Three public school principals said that they prepare the students for life and not especially for university. Two public school principals even questioned the value of university education:

> *"Our primary goal is to prepare them for life in general and some of them are able to go to university. And as I told you earlier, although being at university is a good thing, it still does not guarantee that you will be better. You can still be a good person as well as a good citizen without university. I did graduate from university but I cannot assume that I am better than anyone who did not."*

Public school

In contrast, all the private school principals said that preparing students for university is their primary goal. Furthermore, two private school principals indicated that university entrance is their most important goal as they assess the effectiveness of their school's performance by measuring the percentage of their students who go to university.

> *"Yes, it is one of our aims, if not the most important one … and why is because we measure our performance by the percentage of our students who went to university."*

Private school

The significant difference between the responses of the principals of the two said systems to this question may be another key factor in explaining the academic superiority of private school students. Other reasons suggested by the principals are discussed below.

7.8.5 Reason for the academic superiority of private school students

At the end of the interview, the principals were asked the following open question:

> *In a different phase of my study I found that private school students achieved better than public school students at university; why do you think this is the case?*

Table 7.6 sets out the responses given and the frequency with which each was mentioned.

Table (7.6) The reason for the academic superiority of private school students at university

Reason for academic superiority of private school students at university	Public school principal	Private school principal	Total
Private schools' mission is primarily entry to university	3	0	3
Private schools are smaller in size	1	1	2
Private school students' parental involvement: high	2	0	2
Private schools provide better preparation for university	0	3	3
Management of private schools is better	0	4	4

The selectivity of private schools in admission policy: private schools do not accept weak students	0	2	2

According to the responses of public school principals, it is likely that private school students outperform public school students at university because a private school's mission is to secure students' entry to university, while a public school's mission is to prepare its students for life. However, most private school principals believed that their students perform better academically because the management of private schools is sounder compared to public ones.

It has to be mentioned that not all public school principals agreed that private schools are more effective. A female public school principal said, *"female public schools are better than private schools"*. Another public school principal said that private school students might academically outperform public school students but such schools take a less holistic approach towards education than public schools:

> *"Now I understand you, listen son… these schools are primarily meant to prepare their students for university, their mission is to send students to university and we are not… we try to cover and improve all the possible parts of a person but they do not, they only focus on the academic skills. I happen to know so many people who graduated from private schools… they are perfect… I mean academically speaking, but most of them … I said most, not all of course, are socially inept … most of them fail at starting families or their own business. Now, you have to choose whether your son becomes socially smart with the possibility of going to university, or being graduated from private school and is able to go to university with a high possibility of being socially inept."*

Public school

Some private school principals refuted some reasons that had been mentioned by public school principals. For example, two private school principals indicated

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that school size cannot be a factor. Although they acknowledged that public schools tend to be bigger in size, they believe that the difference is not so big as to explain this phenomenon. Another private school principal said that parental involvement should not be regarded as a reason for the academic superiority of private school students, *"parents are parents here and there,"* she said.

An important possible factor that I had not considered previously was the selective policy some private school principals follow. Based on this policy, private schools conduct tests and interviews for their prospective admissions. This means that the students accepted in private schools are expected to be higher-performers, while public schools have to accept all students registered in their catchment area. However, this cannot be considered as a confounding result as both public and private school students have to achieve a pass mark of 80% or over in the secondary school certificate to get a place at Kuwait University.

The reasons given by public schools were mostly different from those of private school principals although the reasons of both are worth considering. Private school principals attributed the academic superiority of private school students at university to private school management styles, which are better according to these principals. However, one would suggest that private school principals were being biased towards their management style. Also, one private school principal did not consider the parental involvement as a contributing factor for the academic superiority of private school graduates. Nevertheless, and according to the literature, parental involvement is one of the most important factors that positively correlate with the academic attainment of the students.

Indeed, this study, too, found significant differences between the level of parental involvement between public and private school students' parents, in favour of private schools.

In contrast, public school principals attributed the higher achievement of private school students to the low levels of public school students' parental involvement. Still, the question to be addressed here is that why the level of private school students' parental involvement was higher than those of public schools. In my study, not only were private school parents found to have higher levels of socio-economic status compared to those of public school students' parents, but also they had received more education.

7.9 Conclusion

The analysis of the principals' interview data suggested a number of factors to which the academic superiority of private school students at Kuwait University, compared with public school students, might be attributed. These factors were school leadership, the quality of teaching, assessment, feedback, monitoring and support and parental involvement. Clear differences were also found between the missions of public and private schools.

While the mission of public schools was identified as preparing the students to be "good citizens", the mission of private schools was to prepare their students for higher education and to succeed in their undergraduate studies. In other words, since their missions are different, it should be expected that they would adopt different leadership and management styles that concur with these missions.

The differences in the missions of public and private schools appeared to have had an impact upon the teachers. For example, while three private school principals indicated that an effective teacher must be a learning guider as well as a teacher, none of public school principals indicated so. And this can be said to be consistent with the mission of private schools since independent learning is highly required in higher education. On the other hand, while two public school principals indicated that an effective teacher must act as a good role model (hidden curriculum), none of private school principals indicated so. Likewise, being a "good role model" as a characteristic of effective teachers might have a direct link with producing good citizens. Consequently, the quality of teaching in private and public schools should be looked at through two different lenses according to the two different missions of the said two systems.

The same can be said about the differences between public and private school in relation to assessment, feedback, monitoring and support. Although important differences were detected between public and private schools in terms of these factors, these differences are, to some extent, incomparable. To illustrate, almost all public schools indicated that they expect their students to achieve the education goals set by the Ministry of Education, which, indeed, focus on the notion of "good citizenship". On the other hand, and as mentioned earlier, all private school principals indicated that they expect their students to join higher education. It is expected then that the assessment, feedback, monitoring and support of public and private school flow into two different veins according to the missions of these two systems.

Comparably, the level of parental involvement of public and private school students differed significantly in favour of private school students' parents. Since both public and private school principals agreed that there are positive relationship between the level of parental involvement and a student's academic attainment, one can assume that the parental involvement might be one of the factors contributing to the academic superiority of private school students.

Chapters 6 and Chapters 7 have presented the findings from Part 2 of my study. In the next chapter, I will draw on all these different data sources, to consider what might be the key factors contributing to the academic superiority in terms of their final GPA of privately educated students at Kuwait University.

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION

8.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 3, previous studies in the field of school effectiveness have found continuing effects of secondary schooling upon university students' academic attainment (Frey, 1992; Horowitz & Spector, 2005). I was interested to investigate whether these findings would be replicated in the Kuwaiti context. My first research question was therefore:

"Is there a statistically significant difference in the academic attainment of publicly and privately educated students at the University of Kuwait in terms of their GPA at the end of their degree programme?"

In Chapter 4, I described and discussed the findings from Part 1 of my study, the interrogation of Kuwait University's student database. My analysis of these data identified statistically significant differences in the academic attainment (final GPA) at Kuwait University between public and private school students, in favour of the latter. This investigation, did not, however, shed any light on the reasons for these differences. I therefore posed a second research question:

"Why do privately educated students academically outperform publicly educated students at Kuwait University in terms of their GPA at the end of their degree programme?"

As discussed in Chapter 3, the related literature indicated that there are differing views amongst social scientists in explaining the students' academic attainment. The mainstream of school effectiveness literature suggested school level factors

to be responsible for students' academic attainment. Most importantly, school leadership (James et al. 1996; Leithwood & Christopher, 2008; Christopher et al., 2008), the quality of teaching (Sijde 1989; Jepsen, 2005; Thurston et al. 2008) and the level of the students' parental involvement with their child's school (Jacobs & Harvey, 2005; Neuenschwander et al., 2007). There is also considerable evidence that the strongest predictor of academic attainment is the socioeconomic status of the students' families (Cox & Jimenez, 1990; Swartz 1997, cited in Sackett et al., 2009; Myrberg & Rosen, 2008; Patrinos & Cano, 2008).

Since I believed, at the outset of my study, that Kuwait does not have a social class system and is ethnically and religiously a homogeneous society (see Chapter 2), I predicted that school level factors were likely to feature more strongly in explanations for the differences in the academic attainment at Kuwait University between privately and publicly educated students than might be the case in more class-based societies such as the UK. Therefore, I designed the Part 2 research instruments with a focus on school level factors.

This chapter discusses and synthesises the students' and principals' experiences and perspectives in relation to the four main areas identified above, as well as the extent to which schools of the said two systems prepared their students for university, to try to determine if, and to what extent, these factors can account for the academic superiority of private school students at Kuwait University.

8.2 School Leadership

This section has been divided into seven sub-sections: principals' functions and responsibilities, principals' in-service training, leadership styles, autonomy, school mission, school improvement strategies, and school ethos. In the first sub-section I discuss the functions and responsibilities of the public and private school principals and the possible impacts of these functions and responsibilities upon their students' academic attainment.

8.2.1 Principals' functions and responsibilities

The core functions and responsibilities of the public school principals in my interview sample were found to be general supervision (overseeing staff tasks), lesson observation and maintaining the physical environment of their schools. None of the public school principals interviewed explicitly mentioned supporting or monitoring the students' academic progress and attainment when they were outlining their core functions and responsibilities. This echoes what the public school students reported about the extent to which their schools focused on students' learning, wherein the vast majority of them regarded their schools as weak in this respect.

Private school principals, on the other hand, reported that in addition to the general supervision (overseeing staff tasks), they undertake a wide range of functions and responsibilities, some of which are directly dedicated to their students' academic attainment (see Chapter 7). Most of the functions described by the private school principals have been identified by Renihan and Phillips (2003) as functions and responsibilities of effective principals. In terms of the functions that are believed to be associated with students' academic attainment,

private school principals reported five out the seven characteristics mentioned by Dinham (2005) (see Chapter 3). It should also be noted that some of the functions and responsibilities of private school principals can be said to be consistent with what the students reported, especially in terms of those related to the students' learning, such as being focused on their learning, and providing the students with academic support, as well as taking into consideration feedback from the students' parents, who are "customers", according to the students (see Chapter 6).

Being focused on students' learning and attainment, in particular, has usually been listed as a characteristic of effective school leadership (Dinham, 2005). Indeed, according to Teddlie and Reynolds (2000), "focusing upon the importance of academic goals and processes and an academic emphasis have been shown to be core correlates of effective schools" (p.147).

In the next sub-section I will discuss the extent to which principals' in-service training may have had an impact upon their leadership effectiveness.

8.2.2 Principals' in-service training

Many studies have found a positive correlation between the in-service training courses the principals had attended and their students' academic achievement (Simon & Eddie, 2001; Bergeson, 2002; Orr & Orphanos, 2011). They, however, do not seem to explain very well the mechanism by which principal in-service training impacts upon students' academic attainment. Nevertheless, according to Orr and Orphanos (2011, p.53), the practices of principals who attend in-service programmes are "positively associated with school improvement progress and school effectiveness". Orr and Orphanos's (2011) finding is

consistent with the responses of three private school principals in my sample who reported that in-service programmes enabled them to be informed about the new innovations in school improvements. The principal's pursuit of innovation has in particular been emphasized by Dinham (2005) to be one of the most important characteristics of effective school leadership.

In my study, private school principals had received more in-service training than public school principals. Indeed, while most of the public school principals in my sample had attended one free-of-charge and mandatory programme (preparation for new principals), private school principals attended many fee-paying programmes, mostly on educational leadership. This indeed might reflect the passion of private school principals in improving the effectiveness of their leadership styles.

It should be acknowledged that some studies have found a weak relationship between the principals' in-service training and their students' academic achievement (Annunziata, 1997; Alanezi, 1999; Cordingly et al., 2005). Annunziata (1997, p.288) for example characterized professional development courses as "one-shot deals, feel-good sessions, and make-and-take or bag-of-tricks presentations that are superficial, faddish and consultant driven". On this premise, it would seem to basically depend on the 'quality' of the in-service programmes attended by these principals.

In terms of the mandatory programme that public school principals attended, Alanezi (1999) commented that public school in-service programmes in Kuwait, wherein my study was conducted, are "badly organized and useless" (p.128). Indeed, the interviewed public school principals in my study reported badly

organized in-service programmes and some of them went further to suggest a hidden reason for administering such programmes: that managers in the educational districts are paid when such programmes take place. On the other hand, my data do not provide details about the quality of the programmes attended by private school principals, although three private school principals reported that in-service programmes had been useful for them.

As stated earlier, most of the programmes attended by private school principals were about educational leadership. The leadership styles of the public and private school principals are discussed in the next sub-section.

8.2.3 Leadership styles

According to Grift and Houtveen (1999), students' academic attainment can usually be attributed to the quality of the school leadership. Indeed, effective leadership is one of the characteristics of effective schools in all the lists of characteristics of SE (Edmonds, 1979; Mortimore et al. 1988; Teddlie & Springfield, 1993; Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000; Bergeson, 2002). However, the literature does not seem to name one particular style that enhances the students' academic achievement, as it is the appropriateness of the style to the setting which is important not the style itself (Gurr & Drysdale, 2005; De Maeyeret al., 2007).

In describing their leadership styles, private school principals, as they perceived it, tend to be democratic. On the other hand, public school principals in my sample considered themselves as having no specific leadership style as they fluctuate between being democratic and autocratic according to the situation.

My research instruments could not capture a clear picture in relation to the leadership styles of the principals of the said two systems, as leadership appeared to be too complex to be captured by a few questions. Indeed, "leadership is a multifaceted phenomenon that cannot be captured by focusing on a small number of variables" (Lars, 1997, p.1). Nonetheless, I asked the public and private school principals in my sample to describe the extent to which they involved teachers in the process of decision-making and whether or not they delegate some of their powers to teachers. Their responses to these two questions might be helpful in developing an idea about their leadership styles.

8.2.3.1 Decision-making

"The taking of decisions and the manner in which they are taken are at the very heart of the leadership and management of an organization" (Coleman & Glover, 2010, p.57). According to the perceptions of the interviewed principals, private school principals can be said to follow distributed leadership style since their teachers were directly involved in the decision-making (Harris, 2003) and they were also allowed to criticize their principals' policies, and this might be a consequence of the many educational leadership programmes private school principals had attended. In contrast, public school principals, who did not attend in-service programmes on educational leadership, reported that they did not get their teachers directly involved in the process of decision-making.

Studies have shown that distributed leadership in general and having teachers' involvement in decision-making in particular can have a positive relationship with students' academic attainment (Mulford et al., 2004; Heck & Hallinger, 2009; Hulpia and Devos, 2010). In reasoning this phenomenon, the relevant

literature suggests that the more the teachers are involved in decision-making, the more motivated and engaged with their pedagogical duties they become (Coleman & Glover, 2010; Louis et al. 2010). However, due to a contextual reason, all that can be said in this respect is that private schools "might" be more effective compared with public schools in terms of involving teachers in decision-making. The contextual reason behind my last point is stated at the end of this sub-section.

8.2.3.2 Power delegation

The delegation by principals of some of their powers to teachers is considered to be conducive to enhancing teachers' effectiveness and in turn improving their students' academic attainment (Harris, 2003; Crum et al., 2008; Coleman & Glover, 2010). In explaining how this might occur, and like the decision-making discussed earlier, Coleman and Glover (2010) suggest a positive correlation between the delegation of power to teachers and teachers' commitment to their pedagogical duties. While the public school principals in my study appeared to delegate a great deal of their powers to their teachers, private ones did not seem to delegate any. Bearing in mind that the private school students academically outperformed public school students at university, the latter finding of my study might be said to contradict the related literature in this regard. However, my data suggest other contextual reasons in terms of the power delegation that might not be directly connected to the leadership styles of public and private school principals. For instance, three private school principals (out of 5) stated that they would not mind delegating some of their powers but their teachers were busy and would hate taking on more responsibilities (see Section

8.3.3: Teachers' salary and workload). On the other hand, two public school principals indicated that they delegated some of their responsibilities to teachers because their teachers had some free time. Interestingly, one public school principal reported that he delegated a great deal of his responsibilities to teachers to keep them too busy to gang up on him as a new principal.

For me, and as stated earlier, it is extremely difficult to specify whose leadership practices are more effective: public or private school principals. According to Salo (2008), "Schools, like many other organizations, are complex, ambiguous and paradoxical" (p.495). Indeed, I tried hard to match the available theories with the practices of leadership in public and private schools in the Kuwaiti context but none of these theories could explain the leadership practices either in public schools or in private ones. One possible reason for this complexity is that public and private schools in Kuwait are contextually under quite different circumstances. The former seemed to be affected by the middle educational management in the district where they are located while the latter appear to enjoy a great deal of autonomy. This is discussed in the next sub-section.

8.2.4 Autonomy

In general, the related literature suggests that giving schools greater levels of autonomy enhances their effectiveness, and hence the students' academic attainment (James et al., 1996; Phillips, 1998; Cook, 2007; Bandur, 2012). According to James et al. (1996), the management of private schools in particular tends to be more effective than that of public schools in achieving better students' academic attainment, due to the increased autonomy in terms of curriculum and teacher recruitment that the private schools enjoy. The extent

to which James et al.'s (1996) findings are applicable in the Kuwaiti context is discussed below.

The principals of both public and private schools in my sample reported that they were managerially autonomous. Nonetheless, and unlike those of private schools, the responses of public school principals can easily be refuted. Some public school principals said that they sent their students to the national competitions (optional) so that these principals, if their students won, could receive merit certificates from the ministry. Yet, what public school principals' responses did not tell might be much more important. Public school principals are annually assessed by the Ministry of Education and their promotion as civil employees depends on the ministry's assessment. Additionally, public school principals receive their salaries and school budgets from the Ministry of Education and this, indeed, suggests a great deal of impact on the part of the ministry upon public school principals. Therefore, and regardless of why they did not declare it, the degree of autonomy public school principals enjoy as leaders or managers can be argued to be limited. In contrast, private school principals in Kuwait are, to a large extent, autonomous from the Ministry of Education (Houssan et al., 2002).

So, the crucial question has now become; what is the possible implication on school effectiveness of the degree of autonomy that private schools enjoy?

According to their perceptions regarding the extent to which they are involved in employing their teachers and administrative staff, public school principals answered that the Ministry of Education does not involve them in the process of employing either teachers or administrative staff. In other words, public school

principals have to accept whichever teacher or staff member is sent to them by the ministry and they also do not have the power to dismiss poorly performing teachers or members of staff. Expectedly, and it might be because of the shortage of their power, some public school principals not only indicated a lack of collaboration on the part of their teachers and staff but one of them also noted some hostility to him as the new principal. This concurs with what public school students reported wherein 53% of them did not agree that the administrative staff of the school were respectful to each other.

On the other hand, according to private school principals, not only do they choose their school's curriculum and plan the school's expenditure but also they have the power to 'hire and fire' their staff. Perhaps because private school principals themselves choose their own staff and teachers, all the private school principals reported mutual collaboration and respect among principal, teachers and students. This concurs with the private school students' responses regarding their principals' ability to dismiss pedagogically weak teachers. Furthermore, the indication of private school principals in relation to the levels of collaboration and respect among staff is also echoed in what the surveyed private school students indicated as they also reported positive mutual relationships in their schools.

Consequently, one possible implication of the greater autonomy of private schools is that private school principals are likely to be better able to form what is called "collective social identity" than their counterparts from public schools because private school principals choose their own staff. The importance of collective social identity comes from the notion that it facilitates unity of purpose

(Sammons et al., 1995). In other words, collective social identity binds the views and missions of the managers and their employees without which management loses the ability of achieving its aims (Stephen et al., 2005; Hallinger, 2009). Indeed, according to Haslam and Platow (2001), there is a reciprocal and positive relationship between social identity, the missions of social organizations, and the extent to which they are able to achieve them.

What Haslam and Platow (2001) indicated concurs with my study, since the public school students in my sample indicated that their school mission had, to a large extent, been unclear, whereas almost all private school students reported that their school's mission had been clear. This will be elaborated on in the next sub-section.

8.2.5 School mission

Public school principals reported that the Ministry of Education dictates their school mission and this relates to producing citizens with a strong adherence to the law and to Islamic culture. However, and as stated earlier, the public school students in my interview sample indicated that their school's mission had been largely unclear to them. On the other hand, almost all private school students reported that their school's mission had been clear, and this included building a "good reputation" in comparison with other schools and "customer satisfaction". What constitutes a "good reputation" and "customer satisfaction" for private schools will be discussed in detail later in this chapter, although I discuss below one of the possible implications of developing a good reputation.

The goal of developing a good reputation might have led private schools to compete with each other, which perhaps resulted in the academic superiority of

their students compared with public schools (see Section 8.7). Indeed, the data gained from the principals in my study showed that on the one hand, the relationship between private schools is mostly based on competition. On the other hand, if there is any, the relationship between public schools was likely to be collaborative, as it appears that there is no need for competition since the students simply go to the nearest school. It is suggested that there are positive correlations between schools that are based on competition and students' academic achievement (Henry & Gordon, 2006).

In other contexts, private secondary schools appeared to be more effective in preparing their students for higher education due to the competition between these private schools. In the USA, for example, Chubb & Moe (1990) found that private schools are more effective than public schools because private schools are operating in a competitive environment. Chubb and Moe (1990) concluded that public schools should be forced to compete with each other and with private schools so that they become less bureaucratic and more focused on students' learning in their operations. In the UK, as another example, three-quarters of the top 200 secondary schools were private schools (Paton, 2013). In an article entitled "School league tables: privately educated pupils 'better' prepared for top universities", Paton (2013) states that, "private school pupils [have a] grip on places at leading universities such as Oxford, Cambridge and University College London which demand a string of top grades as a basic entry requirement" (Paton, *The Daily Telegraph*, 2013). This suggests that one of the key factors in this competitive climate between private schools is to prepare their students effectively for entry into higher education. The private school principals in my interview sample supported this suggestion as they reported that they measure

their school's success by the percentage of the students who enter university and succeed there. It comes as no surprise then that almost half of the surveyed public school students did not agree that their school had helped them achieve their potential, whereas almost all private school students reported their school had.

Another feature of schools operating in a competitive environment is interest in and deployment of strategies to bring about school improvement. This is discussed in the next sub-section.

8.2.6 School improvement strategies

According to the OECD international School Improvement Project, school improvements can be defined as: "a systematic, sustained effort aimed at change in learning conditions and other related internal conditions in one or more schools; with the ultimate aim of accomplishing educational goals more effectively" (Cited in Lee & Williams, 2006, p.37). Hopkins et al., (1994, p.3, cited in Teddlie & Reynolds, 2010, p.211) define school improvement as an "approach to educational change that enhances students' outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for management change."

While public school principals were found to be reluctant to "change" and seemed to prefer "continuity", as their improvements were usually restricted to the physical environment of their schools, private school principals were found to be much more ambitious in this regard (see Chapter 7). Interestingly, if we used the parameters of "change" and "continuity" in determining the extent to which public and private school principals were leaders, we would find that, unlike private school ones, public school principals were managers rather than

leaders. Indeed, the distinction between a "leader" and a "manager" has usually been the extent to which they promote "change" (Fullan, 2002; Dexter & Prince, 2007; Gleeson & Knights, 2008).

The types of improvements private school principals in my sample adopted can be said to well match the above-mentioned two definitions of school improvement by both the OECD International School Improvement Project and Hopkins et al., (1994). Indeed, these two definitions emphasized that effective school improvements must contribute to the enhancement of students' outcomes and my data supports that most private school improvements directly feed into enhancing students' outcomes. In contrast, and using the parameters of the said two definitions, improvements in public schools can be argued to be rather modest.

It seems to me that the basic problems that public schools had in their school physical environment or perhaps with their problematic staff (see Chapter 7) as well as their limited autonomy, might have contributed to why the improvement plans of public school principals were not more ambitious. In contrast, since private schools enjoyed a relatively large deal of autonomy and collaborative staff (see Chapter 7), their energies could be directed and devoted to their students' learning, as a strategy for promoting their schools as well as developing a good reputation, as the responses of both private school students and principals suggested (see Section 8.7).

Private school effectiveness in terms of their school improvements might be attributed to the many in-service training programmes private school principals attended, as they themselves indicated that these programmes enabled them to

be informed about the new strategies and innovations in school improvements. Another possible reason for private school effectiveness in relation to school improvement is that private school principals in my sample appeared to have more experience in principalship. Indeed, in my sample, while the average of public school principals was five years of experience as principals, that of private school principals exceeded ten years.

Although there are several factors that contribute to school ethos, school ethos is mainly determined by the school leadership and management (Hargreaves, 1995). Hence, the last point to arise in this section is the school ethos of public and private schools, and this is discussed in the next sub-section.

8.2.7 School ethos

The terms school ethos, culture and climate in general seemed to be used interchangeably in the related literature (Glover & Coleman, 2005). Rutter et al., (1980) described school ethos as "[The] … set of values, attitudes and behaviours which will become characteristic of the school as a whole" (cited in Smith, 1998, p.3).

According to Smith (1998), there are mutual relationships between school culture and school effectiveness and improvement. In general, the more effective the school, the more positive its school ethos, and vice versa (Smith, 1998; Mercedes et al., 2012).

Despite the fact that an understanding of the ethos of any school is extremely difficult to grasp through a small number of interview and survey questions, my data did provide some insights into the ethos of the public and private schools

led by the principals in my sample and those attended by the students who participated in the interviews and the survey. The school culture, discipline, standards of behaviour, relationships among the staff and between staff and students, and the physical environment in public and private schools, are discussed below.

In the Kuwaiti patois (dialect), "relaxed" and "strict" are general words that are widely used to describe the culture of organizations. In general, in the Kuwaiti patois, the word "relaxed" holds a positive image of an organization whereas "strict" indicates a negative one. The responses of public school students suggested that the culture of public schools tends to be strict. In contrast, the responses of private school students suggested that the culture of their schools is likely to be relaxed. My data, however, are unhelpful in 'specifically' interpreting what the students meant by the said two words.

Nonetheless, the private school students in my interview sample attributed the relaxed culture in private schools to what the students called "customer satisfaction", according to which their schoolteachers had to handle them with care to please the parents, or the school management would dismiss teachers if necessary (see Chapter 6). On the other hand, the public school principals reported that they were not committed to please the students' parents (see Chapter 7) and this might have a link with their general strict culture.

Good discipline has been one of the characteristics of effective schools (see the International Handbook of School Effectiveness, Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000), and school leadership is said to be one important factor in determining good school discipline (Renihan & Phillips, 2003). According to the perceptions of the

surveyed students, private schools expect higher standards of behaviour in comparison with public schools. There is also evidence that parents can play an important role in supporting discipline in schools (Skiba & Peterson, 2000; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002). In general, the more the parents are engaged with schools the more their children would adhere to the rules of their schools. Indeed, and among other possible factors, students might adhere to their school's rules because they are afraid that their parents otherwise might punish them. The parents of private school students, in my study, appeared to be much more engaged with schools than public school students' parents (see Section 8.5) and this might provide one possible explanation as to why discipline in private schools was higher.

In addition, many studies have identified that a school culture of positive personal relationships results in a positive learning environment (Mortimore et al., 1988; Teddlie & Springfield, 1993; Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000; Khaparde et al., 2004; Catsambis, 2001). The climate created by the teachers for the pupils and by the principals for the teachers is an important aspect of school effectiveness (Smith, 1998). According to both the interviewed principals and the surveyed students, the relationships between students, teachers and the administrative staff in private schools were found to be better than those of public schools. Again, this might be attributed to the better ability of private school principals in forming "collective social identity" whereas it might be more difficult for public school principals to do so (see sub-section 8.2.3).

Another point is that there is evidence that school physical environment is associated with the school ethos (Mercedes et al., 2012; Valkiria, 2008). To

illustrate, research suggests mutual relationships between school physical environment, learning conditions and then school ethos (Mercedes, et al., 2012). The belief is that a positive physical environment facilitates a positive school climate. Private schools in my sample were found to have better physical environments than public schools, for example, they have more and better equipped laboratories and gymnasiums, etc. (see Chapters 6 & 7). However, it is rather difficult to determine the extent to which the physical environment of public and private schools, in the context of my study, facilitated positive school ethos.

Mortimore et al., (1988) suggested that the atmosphere tends to be more enjoyable in effective schools. According to the perception of the students, private school students found their schools slightly more enjoyable than public school students. However, it is not clear whether these students found their schools enjoyable socially or academically.

Private school students felt proud that they attended their schools. But also, and surprisingly, as it contradicts many of their other responses, the majority of the public school students reported that they were proud that they attended their schools. This finding contradicts most of the other related responses of public school students while this is not the case with those of private schools. For example, almost a quarter of public school students in my sample were not satisfied with the way their school treated them. Furthermore, a third of the public school students felt unsafe in their schools. One possible explanation for this contradiction is suggested by Lewis & Pattinasarany (2009) who believe that high levels of satisfaction reported by public school students might be

"exaggerated because of courtesy bias, low expectations and optimistic predispositions" (p.85).

As discussed in Chapter 5, another factor associated with the effectiveness of schools is the quality of the teaching (Sijde, 1989; Jepsen, 2005; Thurston et al. 2008). Discussion of the data related to the quality of teaching in private and public schools is provided in the next section.

8.3 Teachers and the Quality of Teaching

This section has been divided into seven sub-sections in which I compare and discuss the quality of teaching and assessment feedback strategies in public and private schools and their possible implications for students' academic attainment. This section begins with discussing the characteristics of teachers in public and private schools in the light of their possible effects upon students' academic attainment.

8.3.1 Characteristics of effective teachers

Teacher effectiveness literature suggests that effective teachers are characterized by a wide range of pedagogical and personal characteristics and qualities (Fuller & Kapakasa, 1991; Chidolue, 1996; Kyriakides et al., 2002; Reynolds, 2010; Metzler & Woessmann, 2012). Common characteristics of effective teachers, which appear in a large majority of the lists of effective teacher characteristics, indicate that a teacher is effective if s/he:

> ➢ Promotes the development of independent learning.
>
> ➢ Possesses positive attitudes towards teaching.
>
> ➢ Possesses excellent knowledge of subject matter and pedagogical practices.

- ➢ Focuses on students' learning and achievement.

- ➢ Monitors progress and provides support when needed.

- ➢ Offers constructive feedback.

- ➢ Has good personal relationships with students.

Both public and private school principals in my sample regarded "sound subject knowledge" and "positive attitudes towards teaching" as the most important pedagogical characteristics of effective teachers. These two characteristics are generally agreed to have a positive relationship with student achievement (Chidolue, 1996; Metzler & Woessmann, 2012). Yet, while none of the public school principals mentioned it, three private school principals (out of five) emphasized that an effective teacher must be effective in terms of classroom management. This finding might correspond with the discipline in private schools (discussed earlier in this chapter), which was found in the analysis of the students' survey to be better in private schools than public ones. Most importantly though, three private school principals (out of five) emphasized that an effective teacher must be a "learning guide rather than a teacher" to create a culture of independent learning, yet, tellingly, none of the public school principals mentioned this. In answer to a different question, three private school principals considered "independent learning" as an important characteristic required for academic success at university. Indeed, independent learning is one of the key determinants of academic success in higher education (Griffiths & Smith, 1989; James, 2006). According to Gurdish and Nurulhuda (2007) independent learning is important because it makes the students self-motivated, confident and adaptable to new learning environments. Unsurprisingly, the

responses of the students of both systems gave emphasis to independent learning as one of the most important skills that is needed for success at university.

According to the perceptions of the interviewed students, "good personal relationship with students", "focused on students' learning and achievement" and "excellent subject knowledge," are all characteristics of effective teachers. These three characteristics are also suggested by the relevant literature to be characteristics of effective teachers (Cheung et al., 2008; Chan, 2011). The findings of the students' survey suggested that private school teachers were more likely to demonstrate these three characteristics than public school teachers.

There are other factors that are suggested by teacher effectiveness literature to have possible links with students' academic attainment, such as teachers' qualifications, training and experience (Sijde, 1989; Thurston et al., 2008; Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). These factors are discussed in the next sub-section.

8.3.2 Teachers' recruitment, in-service training and experience

According to the perceptions of the interviewed principals, in order to ensure the highest possible quality of teaching, private school principals conducted interviews with all applicants for teaching posts, whereas in public schools such interviews were rarely conducted. Rockoff and Speroni (2011), states that "subjective evaluations [interviews] present significant and meaningful information about a teacher's future success in raising student achievement" (p.695). In accordance with Rockoff and Speroni's (2011) view, it may be that

private school principals choose to interview their teachers prior to hiring them so they will select the most enthusiastic and effective candidates.

The length of teachers' experience has been found, in many studies, to positively correlate with students' academic attainment (e.g. Mercy, 1996; Jepsen, 2005; Aaronson et al., 2007; Buddin & Zamarro, 2009). On the other hand, there is also a great deal of literature that reports a weak, or no, relationship between teachers' experience and students' academic attainment (e.g. Kane et al, 2008; Boyd et al, 2011, Monazza & Kingdon, 2011). However, in the context of my study, and according to the experiences and perceptions of almost all the interviewed principals, it appears that the more experience a teacher has, the more effective they are likely to be. My data suggest that private school teachers' length of experience is likely to be more than that of public school teachers.

Public school teachers in my study were reported to be hardly ever sent on in-service training programmes, and even if they attended one, it was likely to be badly organized and "offer very little practical classroom experience" (Alanezi, 1999, p.127). In contrast, private school teachers, according to their principals, appeared to have attended a considerable number of in-school training programmes (school site based). Although some studies have found that the relationship between teachers' in-service training programmes and students' academic attainment is weak (Harris & Sass, 2011), most research in this area has found that teachers' in-service training programmes, especially school site based programmes, have a positive relationship with students' academic

achievement (Sijde, 1989; Thurston et al., 2008). According to Teddlie and Reynolds (2000, p.150):

> *"Descriptions of effective schools often mention school site based staff development of quality as one of their important characteristics… it seems to be important that such development is practical, an integral part of school activities rather than an 'add on' and that it is school site based".*

There are other contextual factors that might be helpful in understanding the phenomenon of teacher effectiveness in the context of my study, such as teachers' salary and workload. These two factors are discussed below.

8.3.3 Teachers' salary and workload

Some studies have shown students' academic attainment to be improved by increased teachers' pay (Kingdon & Teal, 2007; Stronge, 2010; Ludger, 2011). In explaining this phenomenon, research found a positive relationship between teachers' pay and teachers' attitudes towards teaching (Mercy, 1996; Lavy, 2002), and having a positive attitude towards teaching was reported by the interviewed principals to be one of the most important characteristics of an effective teacher. However, in my study, and although most of the interviewed principals agreed that higher pay is also motivating, private school teachers' pay was found to be significantly lower than that of public school teachers. Bearing in mind that the private school students in my study outperformed public school students in their academic achievement at university, the results of my study can be said to contradict the relevant literature in this regard.

Some of the working conditions in private schools might provide one possible explanation on the said contradiction. Indeed, in comparison with public schools,

private schools had smaller class sizes, better relationships among staff and with students, better discipline etc.

Another possible explanation may be the power of private school principals to dismiss lax teachers. According to Kingdon and Teal (2007), in private schools "the flexibility of managers to dismiss lax teachers can compensate for their lower wages, since in public schools the government-funded teaching jobs are mostly permanent contracts with little chance of dismissal" (p.484). Private school teachers might be more conscientious and hardworking compared to their counterparts from public schools, because they are afraid of losing their jobs. According to Houssan et al. (2002), while it is very rare to hear about a teacher dismissed from a public school, private schools can dismiss teachers as they wish because, in this regard, they are very autonomous and this to a great extent concurs with what private school principals and students reported in my study.

Although private school teachers in my sample earned less, their workload appeared greater than their peers in public schools. The responses of public school principals indicated that teachers' workloads range from five to ten lessons weekly while it is between ten and fifteen in private schools. This finding also seemed to be at odds with other studies of teacher workload. Excessive levels of workload are commonly associated with low professional commitment and a poor quality of teaching (Timperley & Robinson, 2000; Easthope & Easthope, 2000). Then, the axiomatic question here is why were the private school teachers able to produce students of higher academic achievement while they had a comparatively greater workload? According to Ballet and

Kelchtermans (2008), the effects of teachers' workload cannot be successfully understood without contextualizing it with its organizational culture. Indeed, it should be remembered here that the private school principals in my study said that they did not delegate their responsibilities to their teachers because they felt their teachers had enough responsibilities. The opposite can be said about public schools, as according to the public school principals a great deal of the principals' functions and responsibilities were delegated to teachers as they appeared to have free time. In other words, although contact time with students appears lower in the public schools, it may be that when additional duties and responsibilities are added, the overall workload of public school teachers may in fact be a considerable greater burden.

As for the teachers' workload and its possible relationship with students' academic attainment, one would assume that a greater workload should have a negative effect on the students' attainment. However, and since their students were found to be academically upper-achievers compared to public school students, I tend to believe that private schools had increased the average of their teachers' workload to the extent to which a high quality of teaching can be achieved together with the highest possible profits being made. Logically, an average of fewer lessons per teacher means that they would need more teachers, which would result in paying more salaries (Easthope & Easthope, 2000). Indeed, private school principals in my sample outlined that one of the core responsibilities was balancing the teacher/student ratio and perhaps the profits.

Of course, this is not to say that the greater teacher workload in private schools is an advantage to either the teacher or the students. On the contrary, it could be that if the private school teachers' workload had been lower, the academic attainment of their students might have been even better. In other words, the phenomenon of teacher workload and its possible implications on students' academic attainment is too complex to be explained merely by using the number of lessons the teacher takes.

Other contextual factors may contribute to an understanding of the relationship between teacher workload and students' academic attainment. In this respect, one of the most important researched factors is class size (Nye et al. 2000). Indeed, experience can lead us to the notion that smaller class sizes might suggest lower workload, and vice versa.

8.3.4 Class size

In Kuwait, wherein my study was carried out, there had been evidence that class size had an impact on public teachers' effectiveness (AL-rasheedi, 1998). Furthermore, in a study conducted by Kuwait National Assembly (2012), the findings suggested that public education in Kuwait is suffering from large class sizes (e.g. 30 students). Therefore, I wanted to see whether this is the case in private schools. The class sizes in private schools, in my sample, were found to be significantly smaller than those of public schools. The average class size in public schools was found to be 25 students, whereas it was only 20 students in private schools. This means the difference between the class sizes in the two systems is 20%. Therefore, one might argue that the smaller class sizes in private schools might, to some extent, have minimized the possible negative

effects of the greater number of lessons private school teachers teach in comparison with public schools.

As for the possible impact of smaller class sizes upon students' academic attainment, there is evidence to suggest that the smaller the class size, the higher the quality of teaching. Nye et al. (2000) found that "Small classes appear to benefit all kinds of students in all kinds of schools" (p.123). According to Brühwiler & Blatchford (2011), smaller classes lead to "higher academic learning progresses, better knowledge of students, and better classroom processes" (p.95). There is also evidence to indicate that the smaller the class size, the better the ability of teachers in adapting their teaching strategies to individual needs (U.S. Department of Education, 1997; Jepsen, 2005; Brühwiler & Blatchford, 2011).

Since, in my sample, class sizes in private schools were found to be smaller than those of public schools, one might conclude that private school students were found to be academic upper-achievers compared to public school students due to the comparatively smaller class sizes they had experienced in their secondary schools. However, and according to Corak and Lauzon (2009), although the effect of class size on students' academic achievement is positive, "not all students would benefit" (p.189). Moreover, Ludger and Martin (2006) suggested that the effect of class size on students' academic attainment across countries was sometimes found to be "rather precisely estimated zeros" (p.727). This suggestion from Ludger and Martin (2006) does, however, contradict the mainstream of the relevant literature. Blatchford and Lai (2011), for example, suggested that "there is consensus among many in education that smaller

classes allow a better quality of teaching and learning, and this has led to a policy of class size reductions by a number of states in the USA, the UK, Netherlands, and East Asian countries such as China, Hong Kong, Macau, Korea, and Japan" (Cited in Brühwiler & Blatchford, 2011, p.95). In the Kuwaiti context, the Ministry of Education has also set that class sizes must not exceed 25 students (Kuwait National Assembly, 2012). Therefore, and since privately educated students outperformed publicly educated students at Kuwait University, my study tends to support the findings in much of the related literature, wherein smaller class sizes might contribute to enhancing students' academic attainment.

Another possible advantage of smaller class size is that it can facilitate more effective individual student assessment and feedback (Brühwiler & Blatchford, 2011). As discussed in the next sub-section, the accounts of the private school principals and students who had attended private secondary schools provided evidence of this.

8.3.5 Assessment

Consistent with the views of students in this study, principals of both systems reported that internal examinations, which are held quarterly, were the main instrument used in assessing the students' academic progress. According to Stiggins (2002), using only the parameters of regular examinations in assessing the students' academic attainment is not constructive in ensuring the quality of learning. However, teacher assessment using the medium of homework was also utilized, but while private school students reported almost always having done their homework, half of the public school students in my sample admitted

that they did not always do it. The practice of doing homework is believed to have a positive relationship with students' academic attainment (Grift et al., 1997; Bergeson, 2002; Stiggins & Chappuis, 2005; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2005). Nonetheless, the question to be posed here is why public school students, unlike their counterparts from private schools, were found to have been less interested in doing their homework. One possible answer lies with the influence of parents (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1995; Hong & Lee, 2003). As I will discuss latter in this Chapter, parents of private school students were found to be more involved with their students' learning. They had also received more education in comparison with parents of public school students, perhaps making them more confident and more able to help their children do their homework. It may also be that, since they pay fees for their children's education, they are strongly motivated to make sure their children do their homework.

Another possible answer as to why public school students were less interested in doing their homework compared with private school students might lie with the availability of guidance and instructions about the homework. According to the interviewed principals, while private schools appeared to provide their students with detailed instructions about each piece of work, explaining what they were expected to do, public schools did not seem to provide their students with such detailed instructions. Further, one of the public school principals explicitly reported that there was no need for detailed instructions for each piece of work because the students had already become used to such homework, which they had received regularly since attending intermediate school. This also might be the reason why a quarter of the surveyed public school students indicated that they did not understand how their work had been graded. This

leads me to discuss the importance of feedback and the extent to which it can enhance students' academic attainment.

8.3.6 Feedback

According to Edmond (1979) and Bergeson (2002), giving effective feedback to students about their work is an important characteristic of effective schools and other studies have also found a positive correlation between feedback and the students' academic attainment (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Beno, 2007; Hammond & Yeshanew, 2007). The public schools in my sample were generally found to provide their students with only summative written feedback, sometimes no more than a grade for a piece of work. In contrast, all the private schools appeared to provide the students, as well as their parents, with oral and written, formative and summative, feedback. Also, some private schools reported conducting teacher in-school programmes to train their teachers about innovative feedback strategies and this evidences the importance they attached to feedback.

According to Vollmeyer and Rheinberg (2005), not only is formative feedback motivating but it also gives hints to the students that help them improve their learning strategies. Dylan (2011) indicates that formative feedback "encourages the learner to direct energy towards growth" (p.13). Private schools in my study were found to have given especial emphasis to formative feedback while public ones did not seem to use this strategy. In fact, some public school principals acknowledged not knowing what "formative feedback" means. This may explain why a third of public school students indicated that the feedback their teachers had given them had been unhelpful in improving their work.

8.3.7 Academic support & monitoring individual progress

Not only has individualised academic support been cited as an important characteristic of effective schools, but it was also found to have a positive relationship with students' academic attainment (Bergeson, 2002; Dinham, 2005; Vollmeyer & Rheinbergb, 2005; Beno, 2007). Further, a variety of studies have found that academic support is related to better student motivation towards learning, higher levels of student engagement and hence greater academic achievement (e.g. Greene, et al., 2004; Mercer et al., 2011). According to private school principals and students, private schools provided individual students with support when they found a student struggling with their studies. There was evidence in my study that private schools were keen to provide academic support, perhaps to meet parents' high expectations of these schools.

Although public school principals reported that help within school would be available if the students asked for it, public school students indicated that additional academic support was not available at their schools. In the students' survey, only 7% of public school students strongly agreed that they had received good academic support from teachers at school. On this basis, it might be because of the lack of the individualised academic support in public schools that almost all public school students, in my sample, and unlike private school students, used private tutors in most subjects (see Chapter 6). Indeed, according to Samir, (2008), students use private tutoring when they lack school academic support. The public school principals in my sample also believed that parents of public school students preferred private tutoring than using the schools' support and this might reflect these parents' low expectations of public

schools. Interestingly, public school principals in my sample did not appear to have been irritated by this phenomenon. In fact, some of them admitted using private tutors for their own children.

Tracking each student's progress individually has also been identified to be a characteristic of effective schools (Higham et al, 2001; Bergeson, 2002; Kyriakides et al., 2002). According to the responses of the surveyed students, public schools were found to be much less effective in monitoring their students' progress. The responses of the students concurs with those of the interviewed principals as private schools, in my sample, were found to appoint mentors to monitor the academic progress of individual students, while public school principals argued that they were not able to apply such a strategy due to the large sizes of their schools.

In the next section, I discuss the extent to which public and private schools prepared their students for university.

8.4 Preparation for University

Although it had not been a common feature of lists of effective schools, in each of my research instruments I had included questions relating to the extent to which schools prepared their students for university, because some of the previous studies which had investigated this issue had suggested that private secondary schools are more effective in preparing their students for university (e.g. Murnane; 1981, Lee et al., 1993; Sander & Krautmann, 1995; Evans & Schwab, 1995; Sander, 2000: cited in Pike & Saupe, 2002; Paton, 2013). In explaining this phenomenon, Pike and Saupe (2002) state "the success of students from private high schools is due to better preparation through a strong

academic curriculum" (p.192). However, Pike and Saupe (2002) did not explain what constitutes 'preparation for university'. In the context of my study, 'preparation for university' means the extent to which public and private schools provided their students with the knowledge and skills needed for academic success at university (see Page 213).

Since, in Part 1 of my study, private school students had been found to be higher achievers in terms of their final GPA at Kuwait University than public school students, I had expected to find evidence that private schools had prepared their students for university more effectively than public ones. I also hoped that my interviews and survey questions in relation to "preparation for university" would help me to unpick what private schools do differently from public schools in this respect and whether there were factors other than 'a strong academic curriculum' at play. Both publicly and privately educated students in my sample gave prominence to independent learning as one of the most important skills that is needed for success at university. Almost all the surveyed private school students reported that their school had taught them this skill, whereas half of public school students felt they lacked this skill. It is interesting to note that while three private school principals had identified the skill of "independent learning" as a necessity in order to succeed at university, none of their public school counterparts mentioned this.

Skills such as time management, using library and electronic resources and academic writing have been suggested to be of crucial importance in higher education (Kuh et al., 1997; Sander, 2000: cited in Pike & Saupe, 2002). These skills were also an issue of differences between the students of both systems.

Almost all private school students agreed that they were provided by their schools with these skills, whereas only half of public school students believed so.

The private school students reported that the subject knowledge they learnt at school was helpful at the start of their studies at university, while most of public school graduates did not agree. This supports Pike and Saupe's (2002) argument suggests that the curriculum in private schools may be better matched to university curricula. And this, in turn, might have been a consequence of the autonomy that private schools enjoy in terms of choosing a curriculum, which matched their school's mission (see Section 8.7).

In the preliminary phase of my study, namely the university student interviews, both public and private school students emphasized the importance of English language skills for success at university. As expected, three (out of five) private school principals mentioned a "good command of the English language" as an important skill for university success whereas none of their public school counterparts did. The special importance of the English language as a skill comes from the fact that most of the colleges in Kuwait University use English as a medium for teaching.

Lastly, it has to be mentioned that among the other components of my research instruments, not only did the component of "preparation for university" produce the clearest level of differences between the responses of public and private school participants, in favour of the latter, but this was also the area in which there was the highest levels of agreement between the students and principals

of public schools, and also between the students and principals of private schools.

The role of parents has already been touched on in the previous sections. In the next section, the importance of parental involvement is explored in more detail.

8.5 Parental Involvement

As discussed in Chapter 3, effective parental involvement has been listed as one of the key characteristics of effective schools, in many lists of school effectiveness (Mortimore et al., 1988; Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000; Bergeson 2002). According to Epstein (1992) parental involvement includes a wide range of activities (cited in Catsambis, 2001, p.152). However, in the context of my study, the responses of the participants implied that they regarded "parental involvement" as the extent to which parents are involved with discussion with their children and their children's schools about their children's academic progress, and the extent to which the parents encourage and support their children to learn.

The responses of both the principals and students in my samples suggested that the parents of private school students had higher levels of involvement with their child's school than public school parents. However, I noticed that although there were statistically significant differences in the university students' survey between public and private school students in terms of their parents' involvement, in favour of private school students' parents, still, public school students' responses also suggested that the level of their parental involvement was quite good (see Chapter 6). This made me review the data provided by public school principals.

Having reviewed that data in this regard, I noticed that when they were commenting on the levels of parental involvements in their schools, the public school principals were talking about parental involvement in their schools in general, and were not talking especially about the parents of the students who had been able to go to university. According to the interviewed public school principals, only approximately 20% of public school students obtained the high enough marks (80%) to qualify them to go to university. Further, although public school principals indicated low levels of parental involvement, they did not say that there had not been parental involvement at all. Rather, public school principals reported "low" levels of parental involvement, and they might have included in this "low" level the parents of the 20% of the students who had managed to go to university. What supports this interpretation of the data is that all the public school principals indicated that there is a positive relationship between parental involvement and students' academic attainment, and they evidenced this by reporting that the parents of the students with high academic attainment in their school were very involved. In addition, the public school students in my sample not only reported that their parents had been involved in discussions with their school about their academic progress, but also indicated that their parents, like those of private schools, had encouraged them to study and had been keen that they should achieve high marks at school, as well as rewarding them when they did well in their school exams.

This finding then suggested a further question: Why should public school students, who had experienced good levels of parental involvement with their secondary education and who had gained sufficiently high grades to enable them to go to Kuwait university, be academically lower achievers in comparison

with private school students at university (see Chapter 4), in spite of the fact they were both at the same institution, namely Kuwait University?

As discussed in Chapter 3, school-level factors alone may not account for all the differences in the performance of publicly and privately educated students at university (Rutter et al, 1979, Shea, 2000). In the next sub-section, I discuss one possible answer to the above-mentioned question, which is the possible impact of socio-economic factors on these young people's academic attainment.

8.5.1 Parents' socio-economic status & their children's academic attainment

Socio-economic status was measured in my study only by using the student's parents' educational level and the students' families' income. As indicated earlier in this chapter, I had believed that the socio-economic status of the students' families would not account for the academic superiority of private school students at university, so, and based on my supervisors' suggestion, I gathered these data only for contextual purposes. However, private school students' parents, in my study, were found to have received significantly more education compared with public school students' parents (see Chapter 6). The related literature suggests a positive relationship between the parents' education and the academic attainment of their children, not only at school level but also at university (Cox & Jimenez, 1990; Moschovaki, 1999; Riala et al., 2003; Myrberg & Rosen, 2008; Patrinos & Cano, 2008).

Private school students' parents were also found, in my study, to have a significantly higher monthly income compared with public school students' parents (see Chapter 6). Likewise, the related literature suggests a positive

relationship between parents' income and the academic attainment of their children (Cox & Jimenez, 1990; Moschovaki, 1999; Tempelaar, et al., 2007; Myrberg & Rosen, 2008; Patrinos & Cano, 2008).

These unexpected findings made me interested in attempting to know the possible mechanism by which parents' socio-economic status (as measured by parents' educational level and monthly income) could impact on their children's academic attainment. According to Moschovaki (1999), in the family context, education occurs at every moment in everyday activities. He also suggested that a set of attitudes, expectations and information are transmitted within this context. It is likely that more educated parents have more cultural capital. It also seems reasonable to assume that parents who have progressed to higher levels of education will have a better understanding of the learning process compared with those who received less education. Thus, more educated parents might have more ability in creating a better learning environment for their children compared to those with less education, as well as having more ability in advising their children how to do well in school. In terms of the possible impacts of parents' income upon students' academic attainment, Swartz (1997, cited in Sackett et al., 2009) suggested that parents who are able to afford private education tend to have more understanding and experience of higher education, and higher aspirations in terms of their children's education.

8.6 Summary

On the two measures of social economic status utilized in my study: students' parents' educational level and the students' family's income, private school students' parents scored higher than those of public school students' parents.

Therefore, the apparently higher socio-economic status of private school students' parents in my study cannot be ignored when considering their children's superior academic attainment at Kuwait University. However, this study found compelling evidence that school-level factors are of crucial importance in explaining why privately educated students academically outperformed publicly educated students at Kuwait University.

Private school principals' leadership practices might have been more effective than those of public schools, due to their increased autonomy. Private schools' increased autonomy might have allowed them to have a better ability than their counterparts from public schools to form a collective social identity within their schools. This collective social identity, in turn, might have facilitated private schools' missions of what they wanted to achieve for their students.

Important differences, in favour of private schools, were found in the responses of both the students and the principals in responses to questions intended to explore the quality of teaching in their school. Factors which appeared to be influential included the level of teachers' qualifications, their length of experience in the profession, and the availability of and attendance at in-service training. Class sizes were smaller in the private schools. There was also evidence that private school teachers were more effective than public schools in terms of providing feedback to students, monitoring their individual progress and providing targeted academic support, perhaps, as discussed earlier, facilitated by the smaller class sizes.

In general, according to the accounts of the interviewed principals, the difference in the levels of parental involvement between public and private

schools was rather large, in favour of private schools. However, when it came to the Kuwait University participants surveyed, these differences were considerably smaller although still statistically significant.

Since this study primarily sought to investigate why private school students outperformed their public school counterparts "at university level", an especial emphasis was given to the extent to which these two systems prepared their students for university. Accordingly, and having found that private schools prepared their students for university more effectively than public schools, a test of how "preparation for university" correlated with the other components of the student survey was conducted, to determine which component had the strongest correlation with "preparation for university". As stated in Chapter 6, the correlation of students' preparation for university as an element with the other components of the questionnaire produced the result that "school leadership" was the strongest component that positively correlated with "preparation for university". This suggests, statistically speaking at least, that the school leadership of private schools should hold the clue as to why private school students were found to be upper-achievers compared to their public school counterparts in their final GPA at Kuwait University. As a result, I re-examined the responses of the participants in relation to the component "school leadership".

8.7 Private school students' academic superiority: is it a matter of school leadership?

Having reviewed my data in relation to school leadership, I noticed that some public school principals had believed private school students' higher levels of academic achievement at Kuwait University were due to the emphasis in private schools on their students' progression into higher education. This suggestion re-directed my sights towards the "missions" of public and private schools.

According to Krohe (1995), good results do not come from the mission statements themselves but from the strategies involved in producing them (cited in James et al., 2007). As we saw, private schools can decide on their own mission and have the autonomy of action to implement relevant strategies, whereas public schools work within the Ministry's "mission" and are much less autonomous.

Having re-examined the missions of public and private schools in my sample, I found clear differences. Not only did private schools provide information, advice and guidance to students on how to apply to university and which colleges might be appropriate to their interests/skills, but they also focused on providing them with the subject knowledge and skills for succeeding in their chosen course at university. There has also been evidence that private school missions might have reflected the wishes of their students' parents.

In contrast, not only had the public schools, clearly, sought to prepare their students for "life" (good citizenship) rather than to necessarily aim for university, but also two of the principals interviewed even questioned the value of a university education (see Chapter 7). Unlike private schools, public school

missions appeared to be committed to the Ministry of Education rather than their students' parents.

Smyth and Banks (2012) draw on Bourdieu's concept institutional habitus to explain how schools impacted on students' success and university aspirations in their study of schools in Ireland. There are many indications in my own data that support the premise that the institutional habitus of private schools is more effective than of the habitus of public schools in facilitating academic success. I will discuss the most marked ones.

According to Hemmings (2000), students' daily interaction with administrators and teachers plays a significant role in determining the level of their academic attainment and the extent of their educational and career aspirations. In this regard, clear differences between public and private schools were found. Not only were private schools found to be more intensively focused on their students' learning, but also they had rather higher expectations of what their students could achieve, than the public schools. Unsurprisingly, almost all private school students believed that their schools helped them achieve their potential, whereas almost half of their public schools counterparts did not. This echoes with what the students reported about the knowledge and skills provided to them by their schools, where private schools appeared to have made great efforts, while the efforts of public schools seemed to be quite modest.

Interestingly, my data indicates that private schools did not appear to have advised their students well in which specialty they should take at school, namely Science or Literacy, but they did seem to be heavily involved when it came to what college at university would be suitable for the individual students. Indeed,

unlike public schools, private schools in my sample applied systematic procedures to help their students choose colleges that suit them. This suggests that private school cultures were even more university-oriented than school-oriented. The lesson that can be learnt here is that they appeared to have been looking forward and planning for university from the beginning of their students' secondary schooling. This suggests that private schools surrounded their students with a culture of aiming for academic success and concentrated their students' sights forward towards university. This is to be expected, since private school principals each appeared to measure their own school's success using the percentage of their students who gained entry to university, and some of them went further, reporting their students' attainment at university as another parameter by which they measured the success of their school.

Regarding the success of the public schools in my sample: according to the principals, if measured at all, their success was measured by the extent to which their students could achieve the educational goals set by the Ministry especially the main educational goal which is stated below. Since none of the public school principals reported how the success (or otherwise) of achieving those goals was measured, I looked back to those goals (see Chapter 2) and found that attainment of the Ministry educational goals is too general to be measured. Indeed, one would wonder how public schools measured the "comprehensive and integrated spiritual, mental, social, psychological and physical growth to the maximum of their abilities" (Ministry of Education, 2009) that was emphasized by public school principals. Even if attainment of this general goal were to be measured, this seems to be guaranteed of success, as whatever the results, if the child is assessed as having achieved "to the

maximum of their abilities and possibilities" (Ministry of Education, 2009), then the goal can be said to have been reached. In other words, what constitutes this "maximum" for each child is, indeed, open to question.

As expected, and according to the interviewed principals, not only did almost all private school students go on to university, as opposed to only 20% of public school students, but they were also found to be upper achievers at university compared to their public school counterparts.

The responses of both private school students and principals suggested "customer satisfaction" to be a key aim of private schools. According to almost all the private school students in my sample, their parents wanted them to go to university. Also, research implied that there is a positive relationship between the students' families' socio-economic status and the school institutional habitus and culture (Pustjens et al., 2004; Horvat & Davis, 2010; Smyth & Banks, 2012). As discussed earlier in this chapter, parents who are well-off tend to have high aspirations in terms of their children's education (Swartz, 1997, cited in Sackett et al., 2009). Therefore, it is likely that those parents chose private schools in order to enable their children to enter university.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Introduction

In Kuwait, the commonly held view is that private school students do better academically than public school students at university (Watfa & Motawaa, 2008). However, there had been no empirical research in Kuwait to verify this commonly held perception. The aim of my study was to investigate whether this belief could be evidenced and, if so, why there should be a difference in the final GPA of public and private school students at Kuwait University.

My review of the literature in this field identified some anomalies. While a large majority of studies which compared the academic achievement of public and private school students *whilst still at school* have found that students at private schools are likely to do better academically than those attending public schools (e.g. Coleman et al., 1982; Miller & Moore, 1991; Jimenez & Lockheed, 1995; Dronkers & Robert, 2003; Milton & Rose D. Friedman Foundation (MFF), 2007; Muhammad, 2008; Sackett et al., 2009; Anand et al., 2009; Winai, 2011; Ehigiamusoe, 2012), the results from studies relating to the *longer term* impact of the type of secondary school on academic attainment are less clear cut. Although a majority of studies have found continuing effects of secondary schooling upon university students' academic attainment (e.g. Frey, 1992; Horowitz & Spector, 2005), no clear picture can be discerned of the relative effectiveness of public and private schools in this respect. Some studies have found privately educated students to achieve more highly academically than publicly educated students (e.g. Horowitz & Spector, 2005; Paul et al., 2009;

Hoare & Johnston, 2011); other studies, in contrast, have found that students educated in public secondary schools have outperformed their private school counterparts at university (e.g. McNabb et al., 2002; Cappellari, 2004; Smith & Naylor, 2005; Win & Miller, 2005; Birch & Miller, 2006). It seemed to me, as I reviewed previous studies in this field, that issues relating to context were likely to be influential in the way in which this phenomenon played out in different countries. Many of the studies I read had been undertaken in 'western' type cultures with different social, cultural and economic systems to Kuwait. Even across these 'western' type settings, educational policies had differed according to national values and goals set by governments at different times. Furthermore, within local areas, the missions, and goals of different schools could vary. A multiplicity of factors, therefore, was apparently influencing the relative effectiveness of public and private schools in contributing to their students' later academic attainment at university. Reviewing the literature confirmed my belief that, in order to shed light on the effectiveness of public and private schools in Kuwait, it was crucial to undertake empirical research there. My own study should not only be useful to policy makers and practitioners in my own country, but will, I hope, be a useful addition to the body of knowledge already existing in this field.

When planning my study I had to decide at what point to measure the Kuwait University students' academic achievement. In comparing the academic attainment of publicly and privately educated students at university level, some of the studies I read had used the parameters of university entrance performance, freshers' GPA and the final GPA. The final GPA, in particular, appeared to provide a comparatively more comprehensive picture on the

students' academic attainment as it exhibits their knowledge and skills in a far longer term (e.g. in Kuwait, more than 4 years) (The National Coalition of Education Activist, 1999; Kohan, 2003; Daniel, 2006) and it was the students' final academic achievement level at Kuwait University which I was particularly interested to explore. Of course, using only the students' final GPA did not enable me to investigate any 'university effect' on the students' academic achievements during the course of their studies and on their final GPA but this was not an aim of my study. Had it been, I would have collected achievement data at the end of each academic year for each cohort. Since the commonly held view in Kuwait was that private school students do better academically than public school students at Kuwait University (Watfa & Motawaa, 2008), it seemed appropriate to choose the end achievement of university students (final GPA) in order to explore whether this view was supported by evidence. Hence, my first research question was articulated as follows (the focus of Part 1 of my study):

"Is there a statistically significant difference in the academic attainment of publicly and privately educated students at the University of Kuwait in terms of their GPA at the end of their degree programme?"

Statistical analysis of the data for three cohorts of students at Kuwait University identified that private school students in these cohorts had outperformed their counterparts from public schools in terms of their final GPA (see Chapter 4). Since the analysis did not shed any light as to *why* this significant difference had occurred, the focus of Part 2 of this study was to explore the possible reasons for this phenomenon. Consequently, in Part 2 of my study I sought to address the following research question:

"Why do privately educated students academically outperform publicly educated students at Kuwait University in terms of their GPA at the end of their degree programme?"

As discussed in Chapter 3, in some studies, the academic superiority of private school students had been attributed to the socioeconomic status of the private school students' families and not to the type of school attended (e.g. Cox & Jimenez, 1990; Miller & Moore, 1991; Sackett et al., 2009). However, in other studies, private school students were found to academically outperform their counterparts from public schools even when the socioeconomic status of parents of these students was controlled for (Coleman et al 1982; Kingdon, 1996; Marks et al., 2001; Dronkers & Robert, 2003; Milton & Friedman Foundation, 2007; Paul et al., 2009). However, as I have explained in Chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis, Kuwait is culturally different from western countries where most studies in this field have been carried out. When I started my study I strongly believed that social class, identified as a key influence in studies of academic attainment in Western literature, was not relevant in the Kuwaiti context. I believed that the explanation of the academic superiority of private school students at university would, therefore, likely lie with the nature and quality of the secondary schools these students had attended rather than the socioeconomic status of these students' families, and this belief shaped the direction of my research.

While many of the studies exploring the relative effectiveness of public and private schools had been quantitative studies, measuring the size of the school effect, some studies which compared the academic attainment of students 'at

university' level tentatively suggested that private school students outperformed public school students because private schools 'prepared their students for university' better than public ones (e.g. Jackson, 1981; Murnane, 1981; Bodenhausen, 1989; Martha, 2009; Paton, 2013). Other studies suggested that private school students outperform their counterparts from public schools because private schools were more effective in some of their processes than public schools (e.g. Coleman et al., 1982; OECD, 2000; Dronkers & Robert, 2003; Milton & Friedman Foundation, 2007; Muhammad, 2008). Although these studies did not clearly define the characteristics of an 'effective school', in relation to the schools they had studied, they were very helpful in directing my attention to the literature on school effectiveness.

The school effectiveness lists of characteristics provided me with an overview of the key characteristics of effective schools. However, as an individual researcher with limited time and resources, I had to be selective when identifying which characteristics of effective schools I would explore in my own study. Three of the characteristics suggested by the school effectiveness literature were chosen to be investigated since they appeared to be appropriate to the context of my study. These three characteristics were: (1) leadership effectiveness, (2) teacher effectiveness, and (3) parental involvement (See Chapter 3 – Section 2 for the full justification for choosing these three characteristics.) In addition, having reviewed several lists of school effectiveness characteristics, I noticed that none of these lists included, as a characteristic of effective schooling, the extent to which schools prepared their students for higher education. Since the purpose of my study was to compare the academic attainment of public and private school students 'at university

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level', I considered investigating the extent to which the two systems 'prepared their students for university' to be an important addition. Consequently, in addressing *why* privately educated students academically outperformed publicly educated students at Kuwait University in terms of their GPA at the end of their degree programme, I investigated the following four possible factors:

1- Leadership effectiveness.

2- Teacher effectiveness.

3- Parental involvement.

4- Preparation for university.

As discussed in Chapter 5, in approaching the extent to which the above-listed four factors could explain why private school students' academically outperformed public school students at University, as measured by their final GPA, my study employed a mixed methods approach. Based on the literature review, an interview schedule was constructed and utilized in interviews with sixteen university students. Drawing on the issues emerging from my analysis of these interviews, a questionnaire was designed in order to further explore the emerging issues. Two hundred and two students completed the questionnaire survey. Also, a deeper understanding of the key factors underlying the differences in academic attainment between the three cohorts of students was facilitated by interviews with five public and five private secondary school principals.

Although, for me, it was an unexpected finding, the socio-economic status of private school students' parents was found to be significantly higher than that of public school students' parents. Therefore, the socio-economic status of the

students' families cannot be ignored when considering factors that account for private school students' academic superiority at Kuwait University. However, my study provides compelling evidence to support previous school effectiveness research undertaken in different contexts, i.e. that school level factors can make a difference to students' academic attainment. Indeed, the findings of the questionnaire survey and principals' interviews suggest that private and public schools in Kuwait differ substantially with regard to the said four factors.

In terms of the first factor, namely school leadership, private schools appeared to be more effective than public schools due to their greater autonomy. In my study, unlike public schools, private schools not only choose their school's curriculum and plan the school's expenditures, but they also have the power to 'hire and fire' their staff. Indeed, in comparison with public schools, private school principals seemed to possess greater power. It might be that due to their greater autonomy and power, private school principals may have been better able to form collective social identities within their schools, which is indicated in the literature to be a prerequisite for successful leadership (Haslam & Platow, 2001). Additionally, the private schools in my sample appeared to be more dynamic institutions than the public schools, because of the value private school principals attached to 'change' and 'school improvement' (Fullan, 2002; Leithwood & Louis, 2012). Public school principals were found to be more reluctant to 'change' and seemed to prefer 'continuity'; their discussions of 'improvements' were commonly limited to the physical environment of their schools. Furthermore, private school principals were found to be more focused on students' learning than public school principals; 'focusing on students learning' is a characteristic emphasised by the pioneers of school effectiveness

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field such as Rutter et al. (1979) and Teddlie and Reynolds (2000) as a feature of effective school leadership. Private schools also seemed to enjoy better discipline, higher standards of behaviour and more positive relationships among staff and between staff and students.

This study has also found evidence suggesting that the quality of teaching in private schools may be higher than that in public schools. Private school teachers in the schools sampled had higher qualifications, longer experience in the profession, and attended more in-service training programmes. Private school teachers appeared to be more likely to provide feedback to students, monitoring their progress and providing academic support, where necessary.

Although my findings suggest that the quality of teaching in the private schools in my sample was better than that in the public schools, paradoxically, and contrary to the findings of studies discussed in Chapter 3 which found that pay can be an important motivator, teachers in the private schools were reported to earn less than the public school teachers. However, the power of private school principals to dismiss poorly performing teachers, which was one not available to the public school principals, may help to explain this paradox. Another explanation may lie in the apparently superior working conditions in private schools. Private schools appeared to have better relationships between members of staff and between staff and students, as well as higher levels of student behaviour and smaller class sizes. Previous research in Kuwait had indicated that public education is negatively affected by large class sizes (Al-rasheedi, 1998; Kuwait Assembly, 2012). In my study, the class sizes in the

private schools were found to be smaller (e.g. less than 20 students) than those in public schools, where class sizes exceeded 25 students.

As discussed in Chapter 3, in his comprehensive analysis of the existing literature concerning what constitutes "parental involvement", Epstein (1992) found various aspects of parental involvement to be common in different contexts (cited in Catsambis, 2001). However, some aspects of parental involvement identified by Epstein did not feature strongly, if at all, in the Kuwaiti context. For example, parent participation and volunteering at school and parent access to community resources that increase students' learning opportunities are not common. In my own study, the responses of the participants implied that 'parental involvement' is restricted to the extent to which parents are involved in discussions with their children and with their children's schools about their children's academic progress, and the extent to which the parents encourage and support their children to learn. In relation to these activities, the levels of parental involvement reported by principals indicated that parental involvement in private schools is much higher than in public ones. Yet, some caution in interpreting these data needs to be exercised, as the students in the university sample from public schools also reported good levels of interest and involvement by their parents in their education.

As stated earlier, due to the focus of this study's inquiry, namely investigating the final GPA of university students, a fourth dimension was added, which was the extent to which the students of the two systems were prepared for university by their schools. Here, there was evidence that private schools inform, advise and prepare their students more effectively for higher education than public

schools. This may be due to the difference in mission of the two types of schooling. The public schools' mission was to prepare their students for "life" (good citizenship), which is in accordance with the mission of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Education. In contrast, the private schools' mission was the progression of their students to university. There were indications that private schools' missions were in harmony with students' parents' aspirations for their children, an unsurprising finding as private schools compete with each other and the public system to attract students. Public school principals appeared to feel mainly accountable to the Ministry of Education, rather than parents.

Consequently, school leadership, the quality of teaching and parental involvement appear to be important factors in explaining why private school students academically outperformed public school students at Kuwait University. Also, the extent to which the schools prepared their students for university is an important factor in explaining why private school students academically outperformed their counterparts from public schools at Kuwait University. Of crucial importance, as it permeates every aspect of its policies and practices, is a school's mission – including its aspiration for its students. The mission of a school, whether stated or unstated, appears crucial in its determining students' academic attainment. In the Kuwaiti context, public secondary schools appeared to serve the mission set by the Ministry of Education, which does not explicitly include educating students for access to higher education. Private school education provides an alternative option for those who can afford it and want their children to obtain university degrees.

9.2 Implications and Recommendations

A key aim of this study was to understand the situation in Kuwait and the findings of this study have generated implications for both policy and practice. These are outlined in the following two sub-sections.

9.2.1 Implications for policy

There is a general belief among Kuwait people that the Kuwait government, like many governments in the developing countries, is genuinely seeking to improve the education sector. On the other hand, many Kuwaitis appear to believe that the Kuwait government (represented by the Ministry of Education) is seriously stumbling in the process of improving the quality of education because it mainly relies on the findings of research conducted in western, developed countries.

Many educational activists have been attempting to persuade policymakers to adopt Kuwaiti-based findings as opposed to research findings conducted in different countries, and which are thought to have contributed to our faltering. This study should, therefore, be of interest to the Ministry of Education.

Drawing directly on the findings of this study, recommendations for policy are discussed below.

There is evidence that the main mission of public schools in Kuwait is to prepare their students to be good citizens, and that there is little or no emphasis on encouraging them to aspire to progress into higher education. Unsurprisingly, therefore, only 20% of public school students go to university. One, therefore, can allege that public secondary schools in Kuwait are 'ends' rather than educational 'stages' to higher education. On the other hand, the stated primary

mission of private secondary schools is to prepare their students for university, and most private school students do progress into higher education. As stated in Chapter 2, article 40 of Chapter 3 of the Kuwaiti Constitution stipulates that education is a right for all citizens at all stages (Hilmi, 1989). Accordingly, I recommend that the **Kuwaiti government should consider the preparation of students for higher education as an additional responsibility of all public schools**.

My study found that public school principals had weak control over the quality of teaching in their schools because crucial managerial powers are retained by the Ministry of Education. **The Ministry of Education, therefore, should give public school principals more autonomy, in particular over the recruitment and dismissal of their staff, so that they have more control over the quality of teaching. The Ministry of Education would need to provide additional training for public school principals to enable them to understand these new responsibilities/powers and to implement them effectively.**

Class sizes in private schools were found to be significantly smaller compared with public ones. Also, public school principals reported that they devote a great deal of their time to maintaining the physical environment of their schools. As discussed in Chapter 2, according to the World Bank, Kuwait is categorized as a high-income economy (World Bank, 2011, cited in Ministry of Education, 2011). **Consequently, the Kuwaiti government should not find a problem in providing more funding for public schools to improve the physical environment and to reduce class sizes by recruiting more teachers and/or building new schools.**

One of the potentially contributing factors to the academic superiority of private school students in comparison with public school students at university is that private school students' parents in this study appeared to exercise much higher levels of involvement than the parents of public school students. **The Kuwaiti government should, therefore, consider strategies for raising awareness across Kuwaiti society of the important role students' parents can play in shaping their children's aspirations and supporting their children's learning.**

9.2.2 Implications for practice

Likewise, this study has a number of recommendations for practice at the school level. They are discussed as follows.

There should be clear mission statements from all schools so that parents and students are aware of the school's aims and priorities. Indeed, although I had already been a public school teacher for ten years, I had no knowledge of my public school's priorities, which may have been due to the ambiguity of those priorities. Public schools, for example, could communicate their mission to students and parents through stating it clearly in a board at the schools' gates. Public schools may also establish their own school websites across which they can communicate their school mission.

There is evidence from empirical research that well-organized in-service training programmes for teachers can improve the quality of teaching (e.g. Onderi & Croll, 2008; Sato et al., 2008; Vicki et al. 2008; Harris & Sass, 2011), yet public school teachers in the schools in my sample appeared to suffer from a scarcity of such programmes. Key areas of focus for such programmes would be: best

practice in providing feedback, and the monitoring of student progress. Public schools in my study did not seem to provide their students with systematic formative feedback. In fact, it appeared that public school principals had no knowledge of the concept 'formative feedback'. Also, public schools in my study were found to be weak in terms of monitoring their students' academic progress. Hence, this study recommends that **there should be in-service training for teachers in public schools on assessment and feedback strategies. Public schools should also be more active in monitoring individual students' academic progress.**

Since public school students in my study reported that their schools did not provide them with information in relation to what course of study might be suitable for them at the university, **it would be helpful if public schools were more active in providing their students with information, advice, and guidance about progression into higher education.** This might also help to raise aspirations amongst public schools students and their parents. As suggested by the students interviewed in my sample, public schools could use a variety of methods. The students suggested schools could arrange introductory tours to university and/or could hold seminars at school to which some current university students could be invited, to provide information on the processes of admission to and registration at university, and to talk about their experiences of being an undergraduate. Public schools could also distribute a booklet giving students short pieces of information about each college. As the students suggested, this booklet could also include the conditions and requirements of the university's different colleges and the career potential for each degree programme.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, public school principals reported low levels of parental involvement in their schools. They also suggested that parents can play an important role in enhancing their children's' learning. **Consequently, public schools should explore new ways of encouraging parents to visit and to get involved in their child's academic progress.** As discussed in Chapter 3, parents can be involved in many ways (Catsambis, 2001) such as: (1) parent-school communications about school programmes and student progress, (2) parent participation and volunteering at school, (3) parent and school communications regarding learning activities at home, and (4) parent involvement in school decision making and governance.

9.3 Contribution to Knowledge

As discussed in Chapter 3, the majority of previous studies comparing public and private secondary schools have focused on the academic achievements of students while at school. Only a small number of studies, which were almost entirely quantitative, have investigated the impact of the secondary school on attainment at university (e.g. Bodenhausen; 1989; Almqoci, 2000; Marks et al., 2001; Cappellari, 2004; Paul et al., 2009; Hoare & Johnston, 2011). None of these studies was undertaken in Kuwait. Part 1 of my study replicated these studies' focus, but in relation to three cohorts of students attending Kuwait University. As far as I know, none of the studies comparing public and private secondary school students 'at university' had intensively utilised the existing body of school effectiveness literature in studying this phenomenon.

In Part 2 of my study, and in the light of school effectiveness literature, I tried to unpick why it is that private schools students continue to outperform public school students, even after they have left their secondary school.

Many studies have been conducted to examine the differences in academic attainment of students at public and private schools since Coleman et al. (1982) published their study of American secondary schools. However, there is still a debate about the extent to which private school students are academically higher achievers than public school students. As discussed earlier in this chapter, while the majority of studies conducted at school level had found that private school students academically outperform their counterparts from public schools, the studies administered at university level appeared to report conflicting results. My study has contributed to this field by extending our understanding of the 'private versus public' phenomenon to a non-western context. As discussed in Chapter 3, none of the lists of characteristics of effective schools included references to the extent to which schools prepared their students for higher education (Edmonds, 1979; Rutter et al. 1979; Mortimore et al. 1988; Sammons et al. 1995; Bergeson, 2002). In my study, and since it was suggested by some of the 'public versus private' studies (e.g. Jackson, 1981; Murnane, 1981; Bodenhausen, 1989; Martha, 2009; Paton, 2013), 'preparation for university' was included as an area of investigation. However, none of the previous studies had explicitly explored or explained what is meant by 'preparing students for university'. In my study, the students interviewed attached importance to their school providing them with the knowledge and skills needed for academic success at university. Furthermore, there was evidence from the data gathered in my study that 'preparation for

university' might usefully be included in school effectiveness literature as a feature of an effective school in contexts where there is mass participation in higher education and progression from school to university is commonly expected. Many of the lists of characteristics of school effectiveness discussed in Chapter 3 did not include a 'clear and shared school mission' as a characteristic of effective schools (see Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). The findings of my study suggest that a 'clear and shared school mission' is a key characteristic of effective schools, if not the most important. Indeed, a 'clear school mission' should always be considered as a characteristic of effective schools because it permeates every aspect of the practices within schools. Of course, not every school may have the same 'mission' – but every effective school will have in place processes and procedures which enable it to fulfill its mission.

There has also been some debate about the transferability of school effectiveness lists of characteristics across different contexts (e.g. Elliot, 1996; Benn & Chitty, 1996). Perhaps this is why Reynolds (1998) stated that more is needed on the extent to which the applicability of school level factors is universal. Although Kuwait has a very different culture from western countries, my study utilized characteristics of effective schools that had mainly been suggested by western studies, and it has provided evidence that these characteristics are useful in exploring the educational system in the Kuwaiti context. This supports the view of Reynolds (2010, p.329) that some school effectiveness characteristics are "travelable" to other contexts.

In 2000, Teddlie and Reynolds (2000) called for the use of mixed methods in addressing school effectiveness research questions. After almost a decade, and according to Klassen et al (2008) "very few inquiries into school effectiveness have strayed beyond quantitative research, while "alternative research paradigms, like qualitative and mixed methods approaches, are needed to extend and deepen understanding of the construct" (p.1992). My study showed how a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods could help to provide a deep understanding of why some schools appeared to be more effective than others.

9.4 Limitations of the study

In addition to the strengths of the study discussed in the section above, this research also had some limitations and these are discussed below.

There has been a call to use large sample sizes in school effectiveness research (Townsend et al., 2007; Reynolds, 2010; Chapman et al., 2012). A criticism which could be made of my study is that the sizes of some of my samples were relatively small. In Part 1 of my study, the investigation of the Kuwaiti University student dataset involved data on (insert sample size) students across three cohorts and this facilitated the identification of a statistically significant difference between the final GPA of private and publicly educated students, though I gathered data from only one higher education institution in Kuwait. The number of students and principals interviewed was also quite small. While it would have strengthened the findings of the study to gather data from larger samples of principals and students and in more than one higher education institution in Kuwait, this was intended to be an exploratory piece of research, through which I hoped to gain preliminary understandings of

the public versus private school phenomenon in Kuwait, which might then be explored further by myself or others in a larger scale study.

Reynolds (2010, p. 89), in discussing school effectiveness research, has identified the need, to move beyond the discourse about 'schools' and 'schooling' to one concerning 'teachers' and 'teaching'. Although it was not possible for me, as an individual researcher, to include all key stakeholders in this study, one has to acknowledge that rich data would have been obtained if teachers had been included in this study. As they were not, I had to rely on perceptions and experiences of teachers, as reported to me by their principals and students. The same can be said about parents who were also not included in this study. Although the participants in my study were asked about the impact of parents upon students' academic attainment, including the students' parents themselves in the study would have facilitated a comprehensive exploration of the reasons why they choose to enroll their children in either a public or a private school, the nature and level of their involvement with their child's education and the factors encouraging/inhibiting this.

Many of my findings and conclusions were built upon self-reporting. Self-reporting often carries the danger of stimulating responses that represent social desirability rather than the truth (Fraley & Krueger, 2009). In the context of my study, Lewis & Pattinasarany (2009) believe that high levels of satisfaction reported by public school students might be "exaggerated because of courtesy bias, low expectations and optimistic predispositions" (p.85). Likewise, private school students may have had reasons to exaggerate some of their responses. One possible reason is that people who pay money for services tend to

exaggerate the quality of these services as a means of self-satisfaction (Abo-Zaina et al., 2007). However, in order to try to address these potential pitfalls, I employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods and undertook data collection with two different groups of stakeholders: principals and students. The responses of these two different groups were, to a large extent, consistent and I believe this increases the trustworthiness of my study's conclusions (Patton 2001).

This study could not determine the magnitude of private and public school effects upon students' attainment, as I did not compare the students' prior attainment at entry into secondary school with their attainment at the end of school or at the end of their studies at Kuwait University. According to Reynolds (2010, p. 204), 'it is far better to measure pupil attainment by means of 'value-added' because schools differ in the attainment levels of their intakes and because initial attainment also influences progression'. Indeed, if this strategy had been adopted, it would have allowed for measuring the sizes of school effects on students' academic attainment. However, the 'value-added' approach was not possible in my study because the Kuwaiti Ministry of Education does not permit their databases to be used by an outside researcher and there were no other appropriate means by which the data could have been collected. Similarly, Kuwait University does not allow its students' to be academically examined by a third party.

My study did not control for the socioeconomic status of the students' families due to the reasons outlined in Chapter 1. However, the findings of my study suggested that the socio-economic status of the students' families should not

have been ignored, as a factor that might contribute to the explanation of private school students' academic superiority at Kuwait University.

According to Pike and Saupe (2002), "the success of students from private high schools is due to better preparation through a strong academic curriculum" (p.192). In addressing why privately educated students academically outperformed publicly educated students at Kuwait University, as measured by their final GPA, I included 'preparation for university' in my study as a factor of potential influence, since it was more specific and relevant to my research problem than studying the effects of public schools' and private schools' curricula. Nonetheless, exploring the impact of public schools' and private schools' curricula upon their students' academic attainment at university might have also provided this study with a fuller explanation of why privately educated students academically outperformed publicly educated students at Kuwait University.

9.5 What next?

As discussed in section 9.4, there were limitations in terms of the scope and scale of this study. However, as an exploratory study, it has provided evidence that private schools students outperform public school students in final GPA at Kuwait University and the student interview and questionnaire data, together with the data from the interviews with principals, have shed light on contributory factors worth exploring in more detail. It has also become apparent that it could be fruitful to explore the nature of the curriculum in the two types of schools and that, to provide a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon, the perceptions and experiences of teachers and parents should be investigated.

A large-scale longitudinal study could compare the academic attainment of a cohort of public and private school students at secondary school level (three years), and then track the academic attainment of the same cohort of students through to university (four years). This longitudinal study would allow for the use of repeated measures (e.g. questionnaires, standardized tests and school scores), which would enable a researcher to examine the 'value added' by the schools, and the trends of the differences in the academic attainment between the students of the two systems. Using a large sample of students in this longitudinal study (e.g. students in 100 public and private secondary schools chosen at random) would also make it possible to control for important variables such as gender, students' parents' level of education, and parents' monthly income.

While recognizing the need for large scale quantitative studies in the field of school effectiveness, I also believe strongly that qualitative data can complement quantitative data effectively and therefore, parallel to the large scale longitudinal study suggested above, I would also recommend conducting a number of case studies of public and private secondary schools. All key stakeholders could be invited to participate in these case studies: principals, teachers, administrative staff, students, and parents. Research tools could include 1:1 interviews with a sample from each group and observations of classroom practice. The latter would enable the researcher(s) to gain an insight into teaching practices in the two different types of schools.   Such a case study approach would enable an in-depth investigation of the wide range of factors potentially contributing to students' academic attainment, such as: school mission; leadership styles; the nature of the curriculum; the quality of teaching;

how schools prepare their students for university and/or for active citizenship; the nature and level of parental involvement and the reasons for this; and the role played by the socio- economic status of the students' parents. Furthermore, one could also consider sampling students from the original school case studies as they leave school and move into university, to investigate how the public and private students respond to the university environment. The Kuwaiti Ministry of Education might be interested in commissioning such a project.

At the beginning of Part 2 of my study, the idea of conducting a large-scale longitudinal study was rejected because of two important reasons. Practically, it would have been very difficult for me as an individual researcher with limited time and resources to have conducted such a study. Moreover, even if it had been practically possible, there is very little literature relating to the issue of school effectiveness in Kuwait. This means that it would not have been possible to have devised a valid large-scale longitudinal study without first undertaking in-depth preliminary research to explore the complexity of school effectiveness as a phenomenon in the Kuwaiti context. My thesis provides the required exploratory findings to facilitate larger-scale longitudinal research with more refined research foci.

Appendices

Appendix A

(Certificate of Ethical Approval)

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Graduate School of Education

Certificate of ethical research approval

STUDENT RESEARCH/FIELDWORK/CASEWORK AND DISSERTATION/THESIS
You will need to complete this certificate when you undertake a piece of higher-level research
(e.g. Masters, PhD, EdD level).

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, and then have it signed by your supervisor and finally by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guidelines/ and view the School's statement on the GSE student access on-line documents.

READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER (the form will expand to contain the text you enter). **DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND**

Your name: Bader Gh. Alsuwaileh

Your student no: 590020124

Return address for this certificate (email address:): al-swaileh@hotmail.com

Degree/Programme of Study: PhD in Education

Supervisor(s): Dr Gill Haynes and Dr Rob Freathy

Your email address: al-swaileh@hotmail.com

Tel: 07586652898

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given overleaf and that I undertake in my dissertation / thesis (delete whichever is inappropriate) to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed: **Bader Alsuwaileh**   date: 16ᵗʰ of May 2011

*NB For Masters dissertations, which are marked blind, this first page must **not be included** in your work. It can be kept for your records.*

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
updated: July 2010

Certificate of ethical research approval

Your student no: 590020124

Title of your project: University Students' Academic Performance and the Influence of Private and Public schooling in Kuwait.

Brief description of your research project:

My research aims to investigate whether the type of school a student has attended - private or public - is a contributory factor to their performance as an undergraduate at Kuwait University, and if it is, to explore why this is the case by investigating within-school factors.

Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):

Analysis of Kuwait university student database: Previous students from Kuwait university – information is anonymised

Interview participants: (a) 16 students aged between18-19 in their first year in Kuwait University.
                                   (b) 10 Principals of public and private schools
                                   (c) 10 teachers in public and private schools.

Questionnaire participants: 200 students aged between18-19 in their first year in Kuwait University.

Give details (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) regarding the ethical issues of:

a) <u>Informed consent:</u> **Where children in schools are involved this includes both headteachers and parents). An example of the consent form(s) must accompany this document.** a blank consent form can be downloaded from the GSE student access on-line documents:

No children are involved in the study.
At the beginning of each interview, the participant will be informed of the aims of the study, their right to anonymity and how the findings will be used. They will be asked to sign the attached letter of consent to indicate their willingness to participate. They will be informed of their right to withdraw at any time.
For the questionnaire survey, the explanation of the aims of the study and how the findings will be used will be presented in a box at the beginning of the questionnaire. No participant will be required to supply their name, so anonymity will be assured. A letter of consent is not feasible for this strand of the research because of the large numbers involved, but participants will be able to decide, after reading the explanatory summary, whether or not they wish to complete the questionnaire and no pressure will be applied if they would rather not do so.

b) <u>Anonymity and confidentiality</u>

The student data provided by Kuwait University are anonymised.
The students completing the questionnaire will not be required to put their name on the questionnaire, so their responses will be anonymous.
The interviewees' real names will not be used in my thesis, nor will the names of the schools participating in my research. Pseudonyms will be used, where required. I will ensure, in

writing my thesis, that no information will be included which could allow for the identification of any individual participant or school taking part in my research.

Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:

Interview schedules for the one-on-one interview (with 16 university freshers; 10 principals; and 10 teachers) will be recorded using a voice recorder.
200 university students will be surveyed using a questionnaire.
No stress should be caused by the questions, as they are not about sensitive issues. The interviews will be conducted only when the time is convenient to the participants. Interviews will be recorded using a voice recorder only with interviewees' permission.

Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):
Transcriptions of the interview data and the completed questions will be stored in a secure place. All data held on my computer will be password protected.
No other ethical issues are anticipated.

Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):
No exceptional ethical issues are expected to occur.

*This form should now be printed out, signed by you on the first page and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's **Research Support Office** for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.*

N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor

This project has been approved for the period: October 2010 **until:** 30 September 2013

By (above mentioned supervisor's signature): *G. S. Haynes* **date:** 17/5/11

N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occur a further form is completed.

GSE unique approval reference:.................D./10./11./70.....

Signed:..**date:**...19/5/2011...
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

This form is available from   http://education.exeter.ac.uk/students/

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
updated: July 2010

UNIVERSITY OF
EXETER

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

<u>CONSENT FORM</u>

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

There is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation

I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me

any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications

If applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project in an anonymised form

all information I give will be treated as confidential

the researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

....
(Signature of participant)   (Date)

....
(Printed name of participant)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher(s)

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact me, as below:

Researcher's name: Bader Alsuwaileh
Contact phone number of researcher: 60071536
E-mail: al-swaileh@hotmail.com

Appendix B

**(Letter to the Deanship of Admission and Registration
of Kuwait University)**

LETTER TO THE DEANSHIP OF ADMISSION AND REGISTRATION OF
KUWAIT UNIVERSITY
Subject:
Bader Alsuwaileh
PhD student at University of Exeter, UK
Mobile. 60071536
E-mail: al-swaileh@hotmail.com
30th November 2010

Dear Dean,

I am a Doctor of Philosophy in Education student at the Graduate School of
Education, University of Exeter, UK. I have chosen for my PhD research to
investigate whether the type of school a student has attended is a contributory
factor to their performance as an undergraduate at university, and if it is, to
explore why this is the case. Research in other countries has found that private
school students outperform their counterparts from public schools in their first
year of university, although the difference in performance has decreased by the
end of the degree. I believe it would be useful to investigate whether this pattern
is repeated in Kuwait. The title of my PhD thesis is therefore: "University
Students' Academic Performance - the Influence of Private and Public Schooling
in Kuwait".

I am sending this letter to ask for your permission to have access to data held on
Kuwait University's database for the cohorts who graduated in 2009 and 2010. I
would use the data set to:

1.   Identify the type of school (i.e. public or private) each student in the cohort
     attended prior to university;
2.   Find out their overall year mark at the end of their first year at Kuwait
     University;
3.   Find out their overall mark at the end of their degree.

In the second phase of my research I would, with your permission, like to
undertake a questionnaire survey of and some interviews with first year students
to explore their views on how well their school prepared them for university study.
I will also be interviewing principals in ten schools (five public and five private).
This second phase of my research should enable me to identify factors which
facilitate or mitigate against academic success at university.

My research design has been scrutinized and agreed by my PhD supervisors at
the University of Exeter, Dr Gillian Haynes and Dr Rob Freathy. They have also
ensured that I am complying with the University of Exeter's ethical guidelines for
research. In this context, any data made available to me will be treated
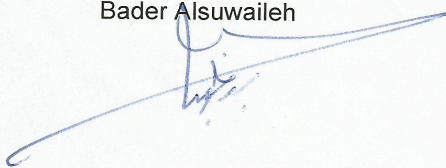
confidentially and securely stored. No-one participating in my study will be identified by name in my thesis.

I do hope you will feel able to authorize my access to Kuwait University's database and my questionnaire survey of and interviews with first year students. If you would like more information about the study, please contact me using either my mobile phone or my email address (given at the top of this letter). Should you feel unable to give permission for what I am proposing, I would be most grateful if you would let me know.

Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Yours faithfully,
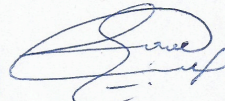
Bader Alsuwaileh

Request granted.
Data will be emailed to you within 1 week, & we authorize its use for the study mentioned herein.
Best of luck,

Dr. Sobeeh A. Almukhaizim
**Assistant Dean for
Admission & Registration**

16/12/2010

Appendix C

(Sample of Ministry of Education approval to interview school principals)

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
Educational Research and
Curricula Sector
EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

وزارة التربية
قطاع البحوث التربوية والمناهج
إدارة البحوث والتطوير التربوي

الرقم : وت /	التاريخ / / 14هـ
مرفقـــات /	الموافق ٢٢/ ١ /٢٠٥م

السيد المحترم / أ. عبدالله الحربي

مدير عام منطقة الجهراء التعليمية

تحية طيبة وبعد ،،،

الموضوع / تسهيل مهمة

يقوم الطالب / بدر غنام حمد الصويلح المسجل في جامعة اكستير المملكة المتحدة البريطانية بإعداد أطروحة الدكتوراه بعنوان " الأداء الأكاديمي لطلبة المدارس الثانوية الحكومية والأهلية بجامعة الكويت – دراسة مقارنة"

فيرجى تسهيل مهمة الطالب المذكور أعلاه بتطبيق أداة الدراسة (مقابلة) المختومة صفحاتها من إدارة البحوث والتطوير التربوي على عينة من المدراء في (ثانوية ▓▓▓▓) خـلال الفصل الدراسي الحالي 2012/2011م.

مع خالص الشكر والتحية ،،،

مدير إدارة البحوث والتطوير التربوي

د/ سميرة محمد عبدالوهاب

– نسخة للملف
– شراع

وزارة التربية
إدارة البحوث والتطوير التربوي

ص . ب : ١٦٢٢٢ القادسية – ٣٥٨٥٣ الكويت – تلفون : ٤٨٣٨٣٢١ – ٤٨٤٢٤٠٤ – فاكس : ٤٨٣٧٩٠٩ – ٤٨٤٢٤٠٤
P.O.Box :16222 - QADSIAH - 35853- KUWAIT- Tel. : 4842404 - 4838321 - Fax : 4837909 - 4842404

Appendix D

(Research Instruments)

INTERVIEW WITH UNIVERSITY STUDETS

Thank you for being willing to be interviewed. My name is Bader Alsuwaileh and I am a Doctor of Philosophy in Education student at the Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter, UK. This interview is part of my PhD study. The aim is to investigate the impact of secondary schooling upon students' academic performance at Kuwait University. I would like to inform you that you have the right to withdraw from the project at any time. I would also like to assure you that your identity and that of your school will be completely anonymous. This interview is expected to last between 30 to 45 minutes during which time you can pose any questions or/and inquiries.

Basic questions:

1. What school did you do to?

2. Was it private or public school?

3. What percentage did you attain on leaving the school?

4. What degree are you studying for at this university?

5. Can you tell me about your parents' education? What qualifications do they have?

6. Which social class do you consider yourself as belonging to? Why?

Specialism at school:

7. What was your specialty at school?

8. Why did you choose (science)?

9. What information, advice or guidance was made available to you in school in relation to your specialty choice?

Assessment, feedback and monitoring:

10. Did you feel you understood how your work was assessed and what you had to do to achieve a good mark for each piece of work? If yes, how did you know this?

11. (If not already covered in the response to Q.10 above) Did you receive feedback from teachers on how you were doing? How was this feedback given?

12. Do you think the school was effective in tracking your academic progress?

1

13. Was help available if you were struggling with your studies? If yes, what form did this help take? Was it useful?

Parental involvement:

14. Can you tell me about the extent to which your parents were involved with discussions about your progress in school?
15. Do you think there should have been more/less parental involvement? Why?

Quality of teaching:

16. How would you describe the quality of the teaching at your school?
17. What were the characteristics of the best teacher you had at school?
18. How would you describe a typical lesson given by your best teacher at your school?
19. What was the nature of relationship between you and your teachers? Give examples please.
20. Was there good communication between teachers and pupils?

School facilities and extra-curricular opportunities:

21. What kind of facilities did you have in your school?
22. Was accessing those facilities easy? If yes, explain how, if not, why?
23. What extra-curricular activities were available in your school?
24. Which ones, if any, did you participate in?

School management and ethos:

25. Can you describe your school management?
26. Was there a clear and shared vision within your school of what staff and students were seeking to achieve for students? If so, what was it?
27. Did your school constitute a disciplined and safe climate that was conducive to learning?
28. Did you enjoy school? Why/why not?
29. Do you feel you fulfilled your potential at school? Why/why not?

2

Preparation for University:

30. Did you receive any advice or guidance from your school on what course you should take at university? If yes, who provided this advice and did you follow it? If not, why not?

31. What knowledge/skills/qualities do you feel you need to succeed at university?

32. Do you think that your school prepared you for university? If yes explain how. If not, why?

33. If you were in a position to change anything about the way your school prepared you for university, what would it be?

Thank you once again for taking the time to participate in this interview.

3

نموذج مقابلة طلاب جامعة الكويت

في البداية أود أن أسجل شكري لك لموافقتك على إجراء هذه المقابلة الشخصية. اسمي بدر الصويلح وأنا طالب في جامعة إكستر في المملكة المتحدة وأنا بصدد إجراء دراسة بغرض الحصول على درجة الدكتوراه. الهدف من هذه المقابلة هو مناقشة أثر المدرسة الثانوية على التحصيل ألأكاديميي للطلبة في جامعة الكويت. وأود أن أوجه عنايتك على أنه لك الحق في الانسحاب من هذه المقابلة في أي وقت. وأود أيضا أن أؤكد لكم أن كل من هويتك الخاصة وهوية مدرستك ستبقى مجهولة تماما.في حال استخدمت نتائج هذه الدراسة للنشر. من المتوقع أن تستمر هذه المقابلة ما بين ٣٠ إلى ٤٥ دقيقة، يمكنك خلالها طرح ما تشاء من تساؤلات.

أسئلة أساسية :

١. ما اسم المدرسة التي تلقيت تعليمك الثانوي بها؟

٢. هل كانت مدرسة أهلية أم حكومية؟

٣. ما هي النسبة المئوية التي حققتها عند لتخرج؟

٤. ما هو تخصصك في جامعة الكويت؟

٥. ما هي مؤهلات والديك التعليمية؟

٦. من أي طبقة اجتماعية أنت ؟ لماذا؟

التخصص في المدرسة :

٧. ما هو تخصصك في المدرسة؟

٨. لماذا اخترت هذا التخصص (أدبي أو علمي)؟

٩. ما هي المعلومات ، أو المشورة أو التوجيه الذي أتيح لك في المدرسة فيما يتعلق باختيار تخصصك؟

التقييم ، والتغذية الراجعة :

١٠ هل تشعر بأنك تفهم كيف تم تقييم أداؤك وماذا كان عليك القيام به لتحقيق علامات جيدة لكل مادة دراسية؟ إذا كان الجواب نعم ، كيف عرفت هذا؟

١١. لم (إذا لم تتم تغطيتها بالفعل في السؤال رقم Q.10 أعلاه) تتلقى ردود الفعل من المعلمين على كيفية كنت تفعل؟ كيف كانت ردود الفعل هذه تساعدك على تحسين أداؤك الأكاديمي؟

١٢. هل تعتقد أن المدرسة كانت فعالة في تتبع تقدمك الأكاديمي؟

١٣. هل كانت المساعدة متاحة إذا كنت تواجه صعوبات في دراستك؟ إذا كان الجواب نعم ، ما شكل هذه المساعدة؟ هل كانت هذه المساعدة مفيد؟

مشاركة الوالدين :

١٤. ما مدى انخراط والديك مع المدرسة حول تحصيلك الدراسي؟

١٥. هل تعتقد أن درجة هذا الانخراط كان ينبغي أن يكون أكثر / أقل؟ لماذا؟

جودة التدريس :

١٦. كيف تصف جودة التدريس في مدرستك؟

١٧. ما هي خصائص أفضل معلميك في المدرسة؟

١٨. كيف تصف درس اعتيادي لهذا المعلم (أفضل معلم)؟

١٩. ما طبيعة العلاقة بينك وبين المعلمين؟ الرجاء إعطاء أمثلة.

٢٠. هل كان هناك اتصال جيد بين المعلمين والتلاميذ؟

المرافق المدرسية والفرص اللاصفية :

٢١. ما نوع المرافق (Facilities) المتوفرة في مدرستك؟

٢٢. هل كان الوصول إلى تلك المرافق سهل؟ إذا كان الجواب نعم ، اشرح كيف كان ذلك ، إن كانت الإجابة بلا ، لماذا؟

٢٣. ما هي الأنشطة اللاصفية المتوفرة في مدرستك؟

٢٤. هل شاركت فيها؟

الإدارة المدرسية والمناخ العام للمدرسة:

٢٥. كيف يمكن أن تصف إدارة مدرستك؟

٢٦. هل كانت هناك رؤية واضحة ومشتركة بين الموظفين (الهيئة التعليمية و الإدارية) والطلاب لما كانوا يسعون لتحقيقه من أجل الطلبة؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم ،كيف تصف هذه الرؤية؟

٢٧. هل وفرت مدرستك مناخ منضبط وآمن للتعليم؟

٢٨. هل كنت تستمتع بالمدرسة؟ لماذا / لم لا؟

٢٩. هل تشعر بأنك حققت طموحك في المدرسة وفقا لإمكانياتك الشخصية في المدرسة؟ لماذا / لم لا؟

التحضير للجامعة :

٣٠. هل تلقيت أي نصيحة أو توجيه من مدرستك على ما يفضل أن تتخصص به في الجامعة؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم ، من هم الذين قدموا هذه النصيحة وهل تبعت هذه النصيحة؟ إذا لم يكن كذلك ، لم لا؟

٣١. ما هي المعرفة / المهارات / الصفات التي تشعر بأنك تحتاجها للنجاح في الجامعة؟

٣٢. هل تعتقد أن مدرستك جهزتك للدراسة في الجامعة؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم، اشرح ذلك. إن كانت الإجابة بلا ، لماذا؟

٣٣. إذا كان بإمكانك أن تغيير أي شيء في الطريقة التي اتبعتها مدرستك لتحضيرك للجامعة ، ما كان يمكن أن تغير؟

أشكركم مرة أخرى لأخذ الوقت للمشاركة في هذا اللقاء.

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UNIVERSITY STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear participant....

This questionnaire is connected to my doctoral work in education at Exeter University, UK. I am conducting a study on the impact of secondary schooling upon students' academic performance at Kuwait University. I would appreciate it if you would take a few minutes to respond to the items as best as you can. Please be advised that complete confidentiality is assured. There is no need to indicate your identity (or that of your school). Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

I should like to thank you in advance for your assistance and look forward to receiving your complete questionnaire.

Your sincerely,
Bader Ghannam Alsuwaileh
School of Education
Exeter University

1. Gender: ☐ Male   ☐ Female

2. Do you think of yourself as belonging to any particular social class?   ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please specify which social class

☐ Upper-class

☐ Middle-class

☐ Lower-class

3. What was your speciality at school?

☐ Science

☐ Literacy

1

4. What type of secondary school did you go to?

☐ Private school

☐ Public school

5. What percentage did you attain on leaving the school?

...................%

6. What degree are you studying for at this university?

....

7. Please indicate the level of your family's income per month?
☐ Less than 1000 KD
☐ 1000 KD – 2000 KD
☐ 2000 KD – 3000 KD
☐ More than 3000 KD

8. Please tick the box below which best describes your father's education?
☐ No schooling.
☐ Finished elementary school.
☐ Finished intermediate school.
☐ Finished secondary school.
☐ Graduate.

9. Please tick the box below which best describes your mother's education:
☐ No schooling.
☐ Finished elementary school.
☐ Finished intermediate school.
☐ Finished secondary school.
☐ Graduate

2

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4
Teachers & the quality of teaching:				
10 The quality of teaching at my school was generally good.				
11 My teachers were concerned with how well students were learning.				
12 My teachers helped me achieve my potential.				
13 I received good academic support from teachers at my school.				
14 My teachers had high expectations for what I could achieve.				
15 I found the work I had to do was at the right level for my ability.				
16 My teachers tried to accommodate the individual learning styles of students				
17 Teachers used a variety of teaching methods to make lessons interesting.				
18 I felt comfortable asking questions in class at school.				
19 Meeting with my teachers outside of class to discuss my academic progress was easy.				
20 The personal relationships between me and my teachers at school were positive.				
21 The teachers were respectful to students at my school.				
22 The teachers at school were skillful at teaching.				
23 My teachers had excellent subject knowledge.				
24 Some of my teachers were inspirational				
25 My schoolteachers were enthusiastic for their subjects.				
26 Employing a personal tutor outside school was a necessity for good academic achievement.				
27 Overall I was satisfied with the quality of teaching at my school.				

3

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	1	2	3	4
Assessment, feedback and monitoring:				
28 Teachers gave me regular feedback on how I was doing academically.				
29 My teachers gave me oral feedback regularly.				
30 My teachers gave me written feedback regularly				
31 The feedback the teachers gave me explained how I could improve my work				
32 My teachers explained how students' work was graded.				
33 I understood how my work was graded.				
34 Teachers set homework regularly.				
35 I always did my homework.				
36 The school was effective in tracking my academic progress.				
37 Help, within the school, was available if I was struggling with my studies.				
38 Overall I am satisfied with the way my teachers assessed me.				

4

Statements		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Assessment, feedback and monitoring:					
28	Teachers gave me regular feedback on how I was doing academically.				
29	My teachers gave me oral feedback regularly.				
30	My teachers gave me written feedback regularly				
31	The feedback the teachers gave me explained how I could improve my work				
32	My teachers explained how students' work was graded.				
33	I understood how my work was graded.				
34	Teachers set homework regularly.				
35	I always did my homework.				
36	The school was effective in tracking my academic progress.				
37	Help, within the school, was available if I was struggling with my studies.				
38	Overall I am satisfied with the way my teachers assessed me.				

4

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4
School management and ethos:				
39 The administrative staff at school was helpful.				
40 Discipline was good in my school.				
41 High standards of behavior were expected of students at my school.				
42 The administrative staff at school was lenient.				
43 My learning was sometimes disrupted by badly behaved students in my class.				
44 The administrative staff at my school treated the students fairly.				
45 My school helped me achieve my potential.				
46 The school cared about the well-being of its students.				
47 The school had a clear vision of what it was seeking to achieve for its students.				
48 The school met the students' academic needs.				
49 I feel proud that I attended my school.				
50 The administrative staff at school was focused on students' learning.				
51 My school had high expectations for students on what students could achieve.				
52 The students and teachers were respectful to each other at school.				
53 The students and the administrative staff of the school were respectful to each other.				
54 I felt safe at school.				
55 Overall I was satisfied with the way my school treated me.				
56 I enjoyed my school.				

5

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	4	5
Parental involvement:				
57	My parents were involved with school about my academic progress.				
58	I would like it if my parents were involved more with discussions about my progress in school.				
59	My parents encouraged me to study.				
60	My parents were keen that I achieve high marks at school.				
61	My parents wanted me to go to university.				
62	My parents rewarded me if I passed exams.				
Preparation for University:				
63	My school advised me on what course I should take at university.				
64	I took the advice of my school when deciding on what course to take at university				
65	The subject knowledge I learned at school helped me when I started my studies at university.				
66	My school prepared me well for the independent learning I would need to undertake at university.				
67	My school helped me to develop my time management skills.				
68	My school showed me how to use a library.				
69	My school showed me how to access electronic resources.				
70	I learned how to write in an academic way at my school.				
71	My school prepared me well for my academic studies at university.				

6

استبيان طلبة جامعة الكويت

عزيزي المشارك....

يرتبط هذا الاستبيان في بحثي لنيل درجة الـدكتوراه في التربية مـن جامعـة إكـستر في المملكـة المتحدة. يهدف هذا الاستبيان إلى دراسة تأثير التعليم الثانوي على أداء الطلبة الأكاديمي في جامعـة الكويت. سوف أكون ممتنا إن تفضلتم بتخصيص بضعة دقائق مـن وقـتكم فـي الإجابـة عـن أسـئلة هـذا الاستبيان. يرجى العلم بأن إجاباتكم سوف تعامل بسرية تامة وتجدر الاشارة بـأن هويتك الشخصية و هوية مدرستك سوف لن تذكر في مناقشة نتائج هذه الدراسة.

شكرا لك مقدما على مشاركتك،

بدر غنام الصويلح
كلية التربية والتعليم
جامعة إكستر
بريطانيا

١

أسئلة أساسية

١. الجنس : O ذكر
O أنثى

٢. في أي طبقة اجتماعية تصنف نفسك؟
O الطبقة العليا
O الطبقة المتوسطة
O الطبقة الدنيا

٣. ماذا كان تخصصك في المدرسة؟
O علمي
O أدبي

٥. ما نوع المدرسة الثانوية التي تخرجت منها؟
O مدرسة أهلية (خاصة)
O مدرسة عامة (حكومية)

٦. ما هي النسبة المئوية التي حصلت عليها عند تخرجك؟
.... ٪

٧. ما هي الكلية التي سجلت بها في هذه الجامعة؟
....

٨. كم هو الدخل المادي لأسرتك شهريا؟
O أقل من ١٠٠٠ دينار كويتي
O ١٠٠٠ – ٢٠٠٠ دينار كويتي
O ٢٠٠٠ – ٣٠٠٠ دينار كويتي
O أكثر من ٣٠٠٠ دينار كويتي

٩. ماهو مستوى تعليم والدك؟
O لا تعليم
O أنهى المرحلة الابتدائية
O أنهى المرحلة المتوسطة
O أنهى المرحلة الثانوية
O دراسات عليا

١٠. ماهو مستوى تعليم والدتك؟
O لا تعليم
O أنهت المرحلة الابتدائية
O أنهت من المرحلة المتوسطة
O أنهت من المرحلة الثانوية
O دراسات عليا

٢

موافق بشدة	موافق	أعارض	أعارض بشدة	العبارات	
٤	٣	٢	١		
				المعلمين و جودة التدريس	
				بشكل عام، كانت جودة التدريس في مدرستي جيدة.	١
				كان المعلمين مهتمين بكيفية تدريس الطلبة.	٢
				ساعدني المعلمين في تحقيق ما كان مناسبا لقدراتي.	٣
				تلقيت دعما تعليميا جيدا من المعلمين في المدرسة.	٤
				كانت توقعات المعلمين ايجابية تجاه ما يمكن أن أحققه.	٥
				ما كان يطلبه المعلمين مني كان مناسبا لمستوى قدراتي.	٦
				حاول المعلمين استيعاب نمط التعلم المناسب لكل طالب على حدة.	٧
				استخدم المعلمون مجموعة متنوعة من طرق التدريس لجعل الدروس مثيرة للاهتمام.	٨
				كانت عملية طرح الأسئلة والإستفسارات للمعلم في الصف سهلة.	٩
				كان من السهل مقابلة المعلمين خارج الصف لمناقشة مستواي الدراسي.	١٠
				كانت علاقاتي الشخصية مع المعلمين في المدرسة ايجابية.	١١
				كان المعلمين يحترمون الطلبة في المدرسة.	١٢
				كان المعلمين ماهرين في عملية التدريس.	١٣
				معرفة المعلمين بمحتوى موادهم الدراسية ممتازة .	١٤
				كان المعلمين ملهمين لي.	١٥
				كان المعلمين متحمسين لموادهم الدراسية.	١٦
				الإستعانة بمدرسين خصوصيين خارج المدرسة كان شيئا ضروريا.	١٧
				بشكل عام، أنا راضي عن جودة التدريس في المدرسة.	١٨
				التقييم و التغذية الراجعة	
				كان المعلمين يشعروني عن مستوى أدائي الدراسي بصورة دورية.	١٩
				كان المعلمين يشعروني شفويا عن مستوى أدائي الدراسي.	٢٠
				كان المعلمين يشعروني كتابيا عن مستوى أدائي الدراسي.	٢١
				شرح لي المعلمين كيف يمكن أن أطور من أدائي الدراسي.	٢٢
				شرح لي المعلمين الكيفية التي يتم من خلالها تقييم أدائي الدراسي.	٢٣
				لقد فهمت كيف يتم تقييم مجهودي الدراسي.	٢٤
				اعتاد المعلمون على اعطائي واجبات منزلية.	٢٥

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موافق بشدة	موافق	أعارض	أعارض بشدة	العبارات	
٤	٣	٢	١		
				كنت دائمًا أقوم بأداء واجباتي المنزلية.	٢٦
				كانت مدرستي فعالة في تتبع أدائي الدراسي.	٢٧
				كانت المدرسة تساعدني عندما أواجه صعوبات في دراستي.	٢٨
				بشكل عام، أنا راض عن طريقة تقييم مدرستي لي.	٢٩

الإدارة المدرسية و روح الجماعة

موافق بشدة	موافق	أعارض	أعارض بشدة	العبارات	
				كانت ادارة المدرسة تقدم المساعدة لي.	٣٠
				وفرت ادارة المدرسة مناخ من الإنضباط.	٣١
				توقعت ادارة المدرسة مني كطالب أن يكون سلوكي وفقا لمعايير عالية.	٣٢
				كانت ادارة المدرسة متساهلة.	٣٣
				كانت تتم اعاقة عملية التعليم في المدرسة بواسطة بعض الطلبة ذوي السلوك السيء.	٣٤
				كانت ادارة المدرسة تعامل الطلبة بعدالة.	٣٥
				ساعدتني المدرسة على تحقيق أهدافي الدراسية.	٣٦
				حرصت المدرسة على سلامة الطلبة الشخصية.	٣٧
				كانت للمدرسة رؤية واضحة حول ما يجب تحقيقه للطلبة.	٣٨
				وفرت المدرسة سبل اشباع حاجتي إلى التعليم.	٣٩
				أشعر بفخر كوني كنت أحد طلبة مدرستي.	٤٠
				كانت ادارة المدرسة مهتمة بتعليم الطلبة.	٤١
				كانت توقعات المدرسة تجاه ما يمكن أن يحققه الطلبة ايجابية.	٤٢
				كانت علاقة الطلبة بالمعلمين مبنية على الإحترام المتبادل.	٤٣
				كانت علاقة الطلبة بإدارة المدرسة مبنية على الإحترام المتبادل.	٤٤
				وفرت لي المدرسة مناخ دراسي آمن.	٤٥
				بشكل عام، أنا راض عن طريقة تعامل مدرستي لي.	٤٦
				كنت مستمتعا بدراستي في المدرسة التي تخرجت منها.	٤٧

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موافق بشدة	موافق	أعارض	أعارض بشدة	العبارات
٤	٣	٢	١	
				انخراط الوالدين (ولي أمر الطالب)
				٤٨	كان ولي أمري يزور المدرسة لمناقشة مستواي الدراسي.
				٤٩	أتمنى لو كان ولي أمري منخرطا أكثر مع المدرسة في مناقشة مستواي الدراسي.
				٥٠	كان ولي أمري يشجعني على الدراسة.
				٥١	كان يهم ولي أمري أن أحصل على درجات مرتفعة في المدرسة.
				٥٢	أراد ولي أمري أن ألتحق بالجامعة.
				٥٣	كان ولي أمري يكافؤني عندما أنجح.
					التحضير للجامعة
				٥٤	قدمت لي المدرسة النصح حول الكلية التي تناسب قدراتي.
				٥٥	لقد أتبعت نصيحة مدرستي حول الكلية المناسبة لي.
				٥٦	زودتني المدرسة بالمعارف اللازمة للدراسة في الجامعة.
				٥٧	أستطيع بفضل مدرستي أن أدرس في الجامعة بإستقلالية.
				٥٨	أستطيع بفضل مدرستي أن أنظم وقتي للدراسة.
				٥٩	علمتني المدرسة مهارة استخدام المكتبة.
				٦٠	علمتني المدرسة مهارة استخدام مصادر المعلومات الإلكترونية.
				٦١	علمتني المدرسة طريقة الكتابة الأكاديمية.
				٦٢	حضرتني المدرسة بشكل جيد للدراسة في الجامعة.

انتهى الإستبيان

٥

Thank you for being willing to be interviewed. My name is Bader Alsuwaileh and I am a Doctor of Philosophy in Education student at the Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter, UK. This interview is part of my PhD study. The aim is to investigate the impact of secondary schooling upon students' academic performance at Kuwait University. I would like to inform you that you have the right to withdraw from the project at any time. I would also like to assure you that your identity and that of your school will be completely anonymous. This interview is expected to last between 45to 60minutes during which time you can pose any questions or/and inquiries.

I'm just going to start with a few background questions....

General questions

1. How long have you been working as a school principal?

2. How long have you been a principal at this school?

3. How many in-service training programs did you go to in the last five years? What were they about?

Can I now ask you some questions about your school....

School

4. Can you tell me about the school when you first arrived?(Prompt: culture, collaboration, communication and shared values).

5. What major changes, if any, have you made since you became principal of this school

6. What is your school mission?

7. What changes, if any, are you planning to make this year?

8. How would you describe your relationship with other schools? (Follow up question: Do you compete with each other? If yes, why?)

Management style& Principal-teachers' communications

9. How do you describe your management style?

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10. Does the supervision of Ministry of Education have an impact upon your management style? If yes, explain please.

11. Can you tell me about your core functions or responsibilities of a principal?

12. Do you delegate any of your responsibilities to your schoolteachers? If so, which ones and why?

13. Do you promote collaborative working amongst your staff? How (for example by power sharing or rewarding staff)?

14. To what extent are teachers involved in the process of decision-making in your school?

15. In what areas, if any, do your teachers have autonomy?

16. Do you monitor the quality of teaching in your school? If yes, how?

17. How do you assess teachers' work?

18. How would you describe your personal relationship with your staff?

Quality of teaching

19. How would you describe the quality of the teaching at your school?

20. What are the key characteristics of an effective teacher? (Prompt: personal attributes and work values)

21. What is the nature of the relationship between your teachers and students?

22. On average, how many lessons does each teacher at your school deliver in a week? Do you think this about the right amount? Why/Why not?

23. What is the average class size in this school? How is this determined? (i.e. who by- the school or the ministry for education?)

Can I now ask you about your teachers' qualifications and experience...

24. Do teachers at this school have to have a particular level/type of qualification to teach in this school? If yes, what is it? Who set this requirement?

25. Do teachers at this school have to have a minimum number of years teaching to teach in this school? If yes, what is it? Who set this requirement?

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26. What impact, if any, does the level of a teacher's experience have upon their quality of teaching?

27. Are your teachers able to go on in-service training programs? How do you decide which in-service training courses individual teachers should undertake?(Follow up question: What sorts of courses do they take?)

28. Do you allocate your best teachers to particular grades? If yes, which ones and why?

29. Can you tell me about the extent to which teachers' in-service training affects their teaching quality? Do you think that the in-service training received enhances teachers' practice? If yes, why? If not, why not?

30. In your view, is there a relationship between teachers' pay and the quality of their teaching? If yes, what is it? (Follow up question: Who set the wages?)

31. On average, how much is the starting salary of your teachers?

Students' assessment, feedback, monitoring and support

32. How do students receive feedback on their academic work?
Prompts: Oral and/or written? Formative and summative or just summative?
33. Do you think that the students understand how their work is assessed and what they have to do to achieve a good mark for each piece of work? If yes, how is this achieved?
34. Does the school track individual students' academic progress? If yes, how? Do you consider this to be an effective method? If not, why not?
23. What support is available if a student is struggling with their studies?
35. What do you expect your students to have achieved by the end of their time in your school?

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36. Do you or your staff discuss your expectations with individual students? If yes, in what context are these discussions held?

37. Do you find, in general, that your students are motivated and keen to engage with their learning? Why do you think this is/why not?

Parental involvement

38. How, if at all, are students' parents involved with discussions with the school about their children's progress?

39. Are you happy with the level of parental involvement in your school? Prompt: Do you think there should be more/less parental involvement? Why?

40. Is it important to satisfy students' parents? Why?

41. Do you think there a relationship between students' academic performance and their parents' involvement? (Follow up question: what kind of evidence have you seen that supports your view?)

Preparation for University:

42. What percentage of each cohort in this school progresses to university? Are you happy with this percentage?

43. Do you have any plans to try to increase the percentage entering higher education? If yes, how might you achieve this?

44. Does the school advise or guide the students on what course they should take at university? If yes, who in the school provides this advice? In general, do students follow the advice? If not, why not?

45. What academic skills do you think the students need to succeed at university?

46. What personal skills do you think the students need to succeed at university?

47. Is preparing the students' for their studies at university an aim of this school? If yes, how does the school do this? If not? Why not?

48. (If not already covered in Q.40), Does the school seek to develop the type of skills that the students will need at university? Prompt: e.g. independent learning; time management; essay writing; use of library; use of electronic resources etc....

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49. Do you keep in touch with your students once they have entered higher education? If yes, how? Why do you keep in touch?

50. In a latter phase of my study I found that private school students achieved better than public school students at university, why do you think private school students outperformed public school students?

Thank you once again for taking the time to participate in this interview.

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مقابلة مع مديري المدارس

أود إن أشكرك مقدما على استعدادك لإجراء المقابلة. اسمي بدر الصويلح وأنا طالب في مرحلة الدكتوراه في كلية التربية ، جامعة اكستر، المملكة المتحدة وتمثل هذه المقابلة جزء من دراستي للحصول على درجة الدكتوراه. تهدف دراستي إلى استقصاء تأثير التعليم الثانوي على أداء الطلبة الأكاديمي في جامعة الكويت. أود أن أبلغك بأنه لديك الحق في الانسحاب من المقابلة في أي وقت. وأود أيضا أن أؤكد لك أن هويتك الخاصة وهوية مدرستك سوف تكون مجهولة المصدر تماما. من المتوقع أن تستمر هذه المقابلة ما بين ٣٠ إلى ٤٥ دقيقة و خلال هذا الوقت يمكنك طرح أي أسئلة أو / واستفسارات.

سوف نبدأ بطرح بعض الأسئلة العامة....

١. منذ متى وأنت تعمل في وظيفة مدير مدرسة؟

٢. منذ متى بدأت عملك كمدير مدرسة في هذه المدرسة؟

٣. ما هي برامج التدريب التي حضرتها في السنوات الخمس الماضية؟ وعما كانت؟

سوف نبدأ بطرح بعض الأسئلة حول مدرستك....

٤. هل يمكن أن تصف لي المدرسة في بداية تعيينك بها؟ (مثلا : الثقافة ، والتعاون والتواصل والقيم المشتركة).

٥. ما هي التغييرات الرئيسية ، إن وجدت ، التي قمت بها منذ أن أصبحت مديرا لهذه المدرسة؟

٦. ما هي رسالة هذه المدرسة؟

٧. ما هي التغييرات ، إن وجدت ، التي تخطط لأحداثها هذا العام؟

٨. كيف تصف علاقتك مع المدارس الأخرى؟ (سؤال ملحق : هل هناك تتنافس بين المدارس، إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم ، لماذا؟)

أسلوب الإدارة والاتصالات الإدارية مع العاملين.

٩. كيف تصف أسلوبك في الإدارة؟

١٠. هل تؤثر وزارة التربية والتعليم على أسلوب الإدارة الخاص بك؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم ، يرجى التوضيح.

١١. هل يمكن أن تخبرني عن وظائفك ومسؤوليات الرئيسية؟

١٢. هل تفوض أي من مسؤولياتك للمعلمين؟ إذا كان الأمر كذلك ، ما هي هذه المسؤوليات، ولماذا؟

١٣. هل تشجيع العمل التعاوني في المدرسة؟ كيف (على سبيل المثال من خلال تقديم السلطة أو مكافأة الموظفين)؟

إدارة البحوث والتطوير التربوي

١٤. إلى أي مدى يمكن للمعلمين المشاركة في عملية صنع القرار في المدرسة؟

١٥. في أي المجالات ، إن وجدت ، تعطي للمعلمين استقلاليتهم؟

١٦. هل تراقب جودة التدريس في مدرستك؟ إذا كان الجواب بنعم ، كيف؟

١٧. كيف تقيم عمل المدرسين؟

١٨. كيف تصف علاقتك الشخصية مع موظفيك؟

جودة التدريس

١٩. كيف تصف جودة التدريس في مدرستك؟

٢٠. ما هي الخصائص الأساسية للمعلم الفعال من وجهة نظرك؟ (مثلا : سمات الشخصية وقيم العمل)

٢١. ما هي طبيعة العلاقة بين المعلمين والطلاب الخاص؟

٢٢. في المتوسط ، ما هو نصاب المعلم من الحصص في الأسبوع؟ هل تعتقد أن هذا العدد مقبول؟ لماذا / لم لا؟

٢٣. في المتوسط، ما هو عدد الطلبة في هذه المدرسة؟ من الذي يحدد هذا العدد؟ (المدرسة أم وزارة التربية؟)

سوف نبدأ الآن بعض الأسئلة حول مؤهلات المعلمين وخبراتهم...

٢٤. هل هناك مؤهلات أو خبرات تطلبها المدرسة لتعين شخص ما معلما في هذه المدرسة؟ إذا كان الجواب بنعم ، فما هي؟ من الذي يضع هذه الشروط؟

٢٥. هل يجب أن يكون هناك عدد معين من سنوات الخبرة في التدريس لقبول شخص ما في وظيفة معلم في هذه المدرسة؟ إذا كان الجواب بنعم ، فكم عدد هذه السنوات؟ من الذي يضع هذه الشرط؟

٢٦. ما هو أثر خبرة المعلم على جودة تدريسه؟

٢٧. ومعلميكم قادرة على الاستمرار في برامج التدريب في أثناء الخدمة؟ كيف يمكنك أن تقرر أي دورات تدريبية في خدمة المعلمين بشكل فردي وينبغي القيام؟ (متابعة السؤال : ما هي طبيعة هذه الدورات؟)

٢٨. هل تخصيص المعلمين قصارى جهدكم لدرجات معينة؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم ، ما هي ولماذا؟

٢٩. من وجهة نظرك، هل هناك علاقة بين الدورات التدريبية التي أخذها المعلمين على جودة تدريسهم؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم ، ما هي طبيعة هذه العلاقة؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بلا ، لم لا؟

٣٠. في وجهة نظركم ، هل هناك علاقة بين دفع المعلمين ونوعية تدريسهم؟ إذا كان الجواب نعم ، فما هو؟ (متابعة السؤال : من الذي ضبط الأجور؟)

٣١. في المتوسط ، كم هو راتب المعلم في هذه المدرسة؟

تقييم الطلاب ، والتغذية الراجعة، والرصد والدعم:

٣٢. كيف يحصل الطلاب على التغذية الراجعة على تحصيلهم الأكاديمي؟ (مثلا : شفويا أو مكتوبا؟ هل طبيعة هذه التغذية الراجعة تكوينية أم ختامية؟
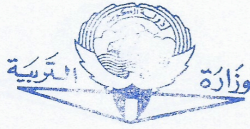
٣٣. هل تعتقد أن الطلاب على فهم كاف عن الكيفية التي يتم من خلالها تقييم تحصيلهم الأكاديمي وما يتعين عليهم القيام به لتحقيق علامات جيدة؟ إذا كان الجواب بنعم ، كيف ذلك؟

٣٤. لا تقدم للطلاب المدرسة المسار الفردية الأكاديمية؟ إذا كان الجواب نعم ، كيف؟ هل نعتبر ذلك وسيلة فعالة؟ إذا لم يكن كذلك ، لماذا لا؟

٢٣. من يوفر الدعم إذا كان الطالب يواجه مشكلات في تحصيله الدراسي؟

٣٥. ماذا تتوقع أن يكون طلابك قد حققوا بنهاية دراستهم في مدرستك؟

٣٦. هل تناقشون مع الطلبة توقعاتكم بالنسبة لتحصيلهم؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم ، في أي سياق تتم هذه المناقشات؟

٣٧. هل تعتقد ، بوجه عام ، أن طلبتك حريصين على التعلم؟ لماذا تعتقد ذلك / لم لا؟

انخراط الوالدين:

٣٨. إلى أي مدى ينخرط أولياء أمور الطلبة في مناقشات مع المدرسة حول تقدم أطفالهم علميا؟

٣٩. هل أنت راض عن مستوى المشاركة الوالدية في مدرستك؟

موجه : هل تعتقد بأنه ينبغي أن يكون هناك مزيد من الانخراط الوالدي أم انخراطا أقل؟ ولماذا؟

٤٠. هل من المهم إرضاء أولياء أمور الطلبة؟ لماذا؟

٤١. هل تعتقد أن هناك علاقة بين أداء الطلبة الأكاديمي ودرجة انخراط والديهم؟ (سؤال ملحق : أي نوع من الأدلة يمكن أن تسوق لدعم وجهة نظرك؟)

التحضير للجامعة :

٤٢. ما هي نسبة الطلبة في هذه المدرسة الذين يلتحقون بالتعليم الجامعي؟ (سؤال ملحق: هل أنت راضي عن هذه النسبة؟

٤٣. هل لديك أي خطط من شأنها زيادة نسبة التحاق الطلبة في التعليم الجامعي؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم ، ما هي هذه الخطط؟

٤٤. هل تقدم المدرسة النصيحة أو توجه الطلاب إلى ما قد يناسبهم من كليات في الجامعة؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم ، من في المدرسة يقدم هذه النصيحة؟ عموما ، هل يأخذ الطلاب بالنصيحة ؟ إن كانت الإجابة بلا ، لم لا؟

٤٥. ما المهارات الأكاديمية التي تعتقد بأنه يجب توافرها للطالب للنجاح في الجامعة؟

٤٦. ما المهارات الشخصية التي تعتقد بأنه يجب توافرها للطالب للنجاح في الجامعة؟

٤٧. هل أعداد الطلبة لدراسة الجامعة هو هدف هذه المدرسة؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم ، كيف يمكن للمدرسة القيام بذلك؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بلا؟ لم لا؟

٤٨. (إذا لم تتم تغطيتها في Q.40) ، هل المدرسة تسعى إلى تطوير المهارات التي سيحتاج الطلبة إليها في الجامعة؟ مثلا : التعلم المستقل ، إدارة الوقت ، كتابة المقالات ، استخدام المكتبة ، واستخدام الموارد الإلكترونية... الخ.

٤٩. هل يبقى الطلبة على اتصال مع المدرسة بعد دخولهم الجامعة؟ إذا كان الجواب بنعم ، أعطي أمثلة؟

٥٠. في مرحلة سابقة من دراستي وجدت أن طلاب المدارس الأهلية قد حققوا أفضل من طلاب المدارس العامة في الجامعة ، لماذا تعتقد أن طلبة المدارس الأهلية متفوقين على طلبة المدارس العامة؟

أشكركم مرة أخرى لأخذ الوقت للمشاركة في هذه المقابلة.
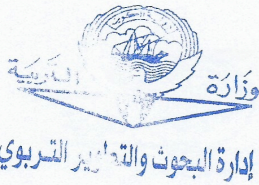
Appendix E

(Sample of open coding of principals' interview)

Public school – Male - A

I'm just going to start with a few background questions....

General questions

1. How long have you been working as a school principal?

   I have been working as p principal for almost 8 years now.

2. How long have you been a principal at this school?

   8 years as well.

3. How many in-service training programs did you go to in the last five years? What were they about?

   To be honest with you, the only training I had in the last 10 years was a five-week's program to prepare me to work as a principal.

Can I now ask you some questions about your school....

School

4. Can you tell me about the school when you first arrived? (Prompt: culture, collaboration, communication and shared values).

   It was such a story (Laughter)… when I first arrived the school was very dirty and everybody was careless… rubbish everywhere… dirty walls and floors no garden. Then I thought the best thing to do was to clean the school up… then I did clean the school up. Afterwards, I thought that I would be better now to start with teachers about whom I had been told to be very bad teachers! What surprised me was that they were very excellent teachers… believe it or not I found that they had been careless and bad because of the environment. From that moment on, I found that the best policy to get the best of your teachers is to surround them with beauty.

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [1]: Experience as a school principal: 8 years

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [2]: Experience as principal at this school: 8 years

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [3]: In-service training programmes in last five years: none

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [4]: Training for principal role: 5 weeks

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [5]: School on arrival: poor physical environment.

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [6]: School on arrival: warned of poor quality teaching

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [7]: School improvement strategies: improve physical environment

5. What major changes, if any, have you made since you became principal of this school?

There are many changes but the most noticeable one is the environment as I told you... I also sorted out the managerial files and reports for both students and teachers... activated the role of the psychologist who had been only smoking cigarettes (he meant: they were sitting doing nothing). *Made a list of points for both teachers and students based on which I reward them and other things... I cannot remember now.*

6. What is your school mission?

My school mission is to achieve the goals set by the Ministry of Education. Can you tell me what they are? *They are many and you can read them on the board behind you (in front of him).*

7. What changes, if any, are you planning to make this year?

I am planning to win more cubs this year. This school used to win nothing before I arrived and now it wins two or three cubs annually and I plan to win more this year. You mean you are competing with other schools? *Yes.* On what? *Sports, writing stories, science, acting, and many others.* Does the ministry reward you personally if you do? *Yes.*

8. How would you describe your relationship with other schools? (Follow up question: Do you compete with each other? If yes, why?) *We integrate each other and compete with each other as well.* On what way you integrate each other? *I may accept new admissions from other schools... we exchange textbooks when one of us has a deficit and something like that.*

Management style & Principal-teachers' communications

9. How do you describe your management style? *There is no particular style I follow, sometimes I find myself having to punish others I*

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [8]: School improvement strategies: improved record keeping systems

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [9]: School improvement strategies: dealt with under-performing staff

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [10]: School improvement strategies: set targets for teachers and students – reinforced with rewards

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [11]: School mission: dictated by Ministry of Education

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [12]: Current school improvement strategies: outperforming other schools across a range of activities, including student sport and academic performance

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [13]: Current school improvement strategies: outperforming other schools across a range of activities, including student sport and academic performance

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [14]: Relationship with other schools: collaboration and competition

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [15]: Relationship with other schools: collaboration and competition

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [16]: Collaboration with other schools: admissions: share resources.

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [17]: Management style: no specific model followed

reward… it also depends on the person you are dealing with. But in general I like rewarding people and I hate punishing others.

10. Does the supervision of Ministry of Education have an impact upon your management style? If yes, explain please. *No.*

11. Can you tell me about your core functions or responsibilities of a principal? *Managerially speaking I make sure that our "week plan" is in progress and I direct the efforts to achieve it. Make sure that the staff is working properly. Vocationally speaking, I supervise the teachers and their quality of teaching by visiting one teacher every day in his class and that teacher is chosen randomly.*

12. Do you delegate any of your responsibilities to your schoolteachers? If so, which ones and why? *Yes, although I can do all my responsibilities alone, I give some of my power as a reward to those who seek power… not all people are keen in materialistic things some of them seek power and some of whom deserve it. For Example I have good teachers but they do not like power… merit certificate would do with them.*

13. Do you promote collaborative working amongst your staff? How (for example by power sharing or rewarding staff)?
Yes I do that all the time and as you said by both power sharing and rewarding them as well as punishing those who are not collaborative. How you punish them? There are many ways but I do not prefer to mention them.

14. To what extent are teachers involved in the process of decision-making in your school? *To some extent they are involved… I mean they are involved indirectly. There is a staff meeting, which is held weekly, and they give some suggestions or recommendations and some of these are worth considering.*

15. In what areas, if any, do your teachers have autonomy? *I give the autonomy to creative teachers and experienced ones while you cannot give autonomy to new teachers for instance. And as we said earlier, autonomy can be given to some teachers as a reward.*

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [18]: Management style: use rewards and punishments tailored to individual members of staff

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [19]: Management style: personal preference for rewarding

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [20]: Impact of Ministry of Education on management style: No but previous responses indicate there is an impact – e.g. in relation to performance related rewards

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [21]: Core principal functions/responsibilities: supervising weekly planning

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [22]: Delegation of powers: used as a reward for those who wish power.

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [23]: Delegation of powers: some teachers do not wish this; prefer merit certificate as reward

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [24]: Promotion of collaborative working: power sharing

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [25]: Promotion of collaborative working: punishment for those who don't collaborate.

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [26]: Teacher involvement in decision making: indirectly

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [27]: Teacher involvement in decision making: consultation – staff meetings

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [28]: Teacher autonomy: differentiated

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [29]: Teacher autonomy: not for new teachers

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [30]: Teacher autonomy: reward

16. Do you monitor the quality of teaching in your school? If yes, how?

Yes as I told you earlier I visit teachers and I see the remarks of the students' examinations.

17. How do you assess teachers' work?

It's not me alone who assess teachers… we are three I and the teacher's supervisor (Ministry) and the head of the department the teacher belongs to. We fill in a form at the end of the year. The ministry sets this form and it examines the extent to which a teacher is committed to his vocational and managerial duties.

18. How would you describe your personal relationship with your staff?

I am formal within the school and a friend outside work; I believe this the healthiest relationship one would develop with his employees.

Quality of teaching

19. How would you describe the quality of the teaching at your school?

I think the quality of the teaching at my school is quite high, however I think we have to be much better because the gap is rather big… I mean most of the students came from very weak intermediate schools. Why you think they were weak schools? *I do not think I am sure that those schools were very poor… some of the students can hardly read! What would you describe a school which most of its students smoke or cannot solve simple arithmetic problems. (Laughter) some of them do not know even the national anthem!*

20. What are the key characteristics of an effective teacher? (Prompt: personal attributes and work values) *first of all, his attitudes towards being teacher must good, he must believe in his important role in improving a whole generation, honest with himself and with his students. He must be punctual,*

show commitment and able to achieve the educational goals as well as being able to choose the best and the shortest ways to achieve these goals. An effective teacher must be able to add to the syllabus not to be content with it. An effective teacher must not be content with memorizing facts; he must exceed memorizing by using high levels of

critical thinking. An effective teacher must be polite and clean so that he can be a good example for the students... in short an effective teacher must an effective person

21. What is the nature of the relationship between your teachers and students? *You cannot determine the nature of the relationships between teachers and students. Some of them tend to be formal while others don't. On my part, I encourage informal relationships as long as students are treated wisely.*

22. On average, how many lessons does each teacher at your school deliver in a week? Do you think this about the right amount? Why/Why not?

I would say eight lessons or let me say they vary from 5 to 10 lessons weekly depending on the subject and the other managerial duties a teacher has and I think this about the right amount. Why? You cannot give a teacher more than this amount because this would affect his performance badly. On the other hand, you cannot give a teacher one lesson weekly although I would love this because you would need to double their numbers 5 times or more (smiling).

23. What is the average class size in this school?   How is this determined? (i.e. who by- the school or the ministry for education?) *The class size must be a maximum of 25 students and the ministry sets this and we do our best to achieve this target although sometimes this is impossible. For example, I was able to reduce the class size to 22 on average in the 11th while the best thing we could reach for the 10th is about 29. Could you tell me why this is? Bad planning... the ministry asks us to make the number 25 and at the same time there is shortage of some teachers of some subjects, which is science mostly. I have two physics teachers for instance, if I opened more classes I would have to double the number of their weekly lessons.*

Can I now ask you about your teachers' qualifications and experience...

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [50]: Effective teacher characteristics: teaching and expecting critical thinking by students

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [51]: Effective teacher characteristics: high personal standards – polite/clean

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [52]: Effective teacher characteristics: good role model

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [53]: Teacher-student relationships: differentiated according to student – formal/informal

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [54]: Teacher workload: 5-10 lessons weekly – depends on teachers' managerial duties

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [55]: Teacher workload: appropriate

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [56]: Teacher workload: if greater would affect performance

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [57]: Teacher workload: if greater would affect performance

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [58]: Teacher workload: if less, would require more teachers

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [59]: Average class size: Ministry sets 25 maximum

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [60]: Average class size: Ministry target not always met – staff/student ratio differs across year groups

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [61]: Average class size: Ministry target not always met: teacher shortages in some subjects

24. Do teachers at this school have to have a particular level/type of qualification to teach in this school? If yes, what is it? Who set this requirement?

For Kuwaitis the only requirement is to have a BA and for non-Kuwaitis they have to pass an interview. This is set by ministry and I have nothing to do in appointing teachers.

25. Do teachers at this school have to have a minimum number of years teaching to teach in this school? If yes, what is it? Who set this requirement?

No, there is no minimum number of years and also this is set by the ministry.

26. What impact, if any, does the level of a teacher's experience have upon their quality of teaching? *The more a teacher is experienced the better his quality of teaching will be.*

27. Are your teachers able to go on in-service training programs? How do you decide which in-service training courses individual teachers should undertake? (Follow up question: What sorts of courses do they take?) *Honestly, in-service programs are very rare. For example, I have 43 teachers in my school and only one of them is taking a compulsory program because the ministry has changed the textbook he teaches and they are training teachers for the new textbook.*

28. Do you allocate your best teachers to particular grades? If yes, which ones and why? *Yes, I allocate my best teachers in 12th because they should be well prepared for the national examinations.*

29. Can you tell me about the extent to which teachers' in-service training affects their teaching quality? Do you think that the in-service training received enhances teachers' practice? If yes, why? If not, why not? *I do not know, but the answer should be yes.*

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [62]: Teacher qualifications: Kuwaitis = BA

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [63]: Teacher qualifications: non-Kuwaitis = BA + interview

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [64]: Teacher appointments: no Principal involvement – Ministry responsibility

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [65]: Teacher experience requirement: None

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [66]: Relationship between experience and teaching quality: positive correlation

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [67]: In-service training: scarcity

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [68]: In-service training: ministry initiated

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [69]: Teacher quality: grade allocation – 12th

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [70]: Quality of teaching - Impact of in-service training: don't know.

30. In your view, is there a relationship between teachers' pay and the quality of their teaching? If yes, what is it? (Follow up question: Who set the wages?)

Mm… I do not think so. You know... Kuwaiti teachers are paid more than non-Kuwaitis and in general non-Kuwaiti teachers are better than Kuwaitis. May be they are afraid of being dismissed by the ministry? I see what you mean… yes perhaps or perhaps their salary is far better than the one they used to earn in their countries.

31. On average, how much is the starting salary of your teachers?

The starting salary of Kuwaitis is about 1200 KD (3000 GBP) and non-Kuwaitis are paid approximately 400 KD (1000 GBP).

Students' assessment, feedback, monitoring and support

32. How do students receive feedback on their academic work? Prompts: Oral and/or written? Formative and summative or just summative? *They receive what we call "a student record" every six weeks.* Is this formative or summative? *It's summative for one of the four quarters (Academic year).* And you do not have oral feedback or formative? *No we do not have formative, in fact this is the first time I have heard about such feedback and there is oral feedback but it is something we cannot control… I mean some teachers may do oral feedback others might not….* He asked about formative feedback and I explained it then he answered "No".

33. Do you think that the students understand how their work is assessed and what they have to do to achieve a good mark for each piece of work? If yes, how is this achieved? *Students are well aware of the way based on which they are assessed; they are assessed by the examinations that are held every five weeks. The teachers also assess homework and schoolwork but these include approximately 25% of their final mark, this is for the 10th and 11th and for the 12th only 10%.*

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [71]: Quality of teaching: impact of higher pay - none

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [72]: Quality of teaching: Non-Kuwaitis better than Kuwaitis.

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [73]: Teacher Salaries: Kuwaitis higher paid than non- Kuwaitis

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [74]: Assessment feedback: summative written feedback, quarterly for each student

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [75]: Assessment feedback: No formative.

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [76]: Assessment feedback: Some oral feedback – depends on teacher

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [77]: Assessment feedback: had no prior knowledge of 'formative' feedback

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [78]: Student knowledge of assessment types and criteria: yes

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [79]: Student assessment types: five weekly exams

Bader Alsuwaileh 12/1/14 18:13
Comment [80]: Student assessment types: coursework and homework – small proportion of overall assessment mark

Is for homework and schoolwork and the rest is for the national examinations.

34. Does the school track individual students' academic progress? If yes, how? Do you consider this to be an effective method? If not, why not? *I think before this interview I would say yes especially for underachievers but now I am not sure whether this is an effective way, the term you have just said "formative" attracted me and it would be a good idea…I will read about it.*

35. What support is available if a student is struggling with their studies? *If anybody does not understand something he could go to the teacher and ask but honestly most families seem to prefer employing a private teacher to do this job.* Is it a phenomenon? *Yes it is.* Do you agree with this strategy? *I do it for my own kids…I do not mind it.*

36. What do you expect your students to have achieved by the end of their time in your school? *I expect them to be good citizens and able to improve their country.*

37. Do you or your staff discuss your expectations with individual students? If yes, in what context are these discussions held? *Yes we have a list of the underachievers and we have a committee that convenes weekly to solve their problems.*

38. Do you find, in general, that your students are motivated and keen to engage with their learning? Why do you think this is/why not? *I would say no in general and the reason might be their families. Most of the students' families are not interested in their children's learning… as you know because the government guarantees good jobs for their children without significant differences in their salaries.*

Parental involvement

39. How, if at all, are students' parents involved with discussions with the school about their children's progress? *Look, I have almost 500 students in this school and I would say 10 parents come regularly to school and another 10 who come irregularly and I never see the rest of*

those of the 500. Sometimes we call them to come but they do not, and if some of these 480 came he would say the common phrase "my children is like your son and I trust you" and they are not my sons they are theirs!

40. Are you happy with the level of parental involvement in your school?

Prompt: Do you think there should be more/less parental involvement? Why? *Apparently the answer is no I am not happy because the role of the school is weakened by the carelessness of the parents. Without the parents' support our efforts are meaningless.*

41. Is it important to satisfy students' parents? Why? *Tell me where they are to satisfy or dissatisfy them!*

42. Do you think there is a relationship between students' academic performance and their parents' involvement? (Follow up question: what kind of evidence have you seen that supports your view?) *Yes of-course there is, the 20 parents I told you about are the parents of the best 20 students… is this enough for you? And obviously this is not a coincidence.*

Preparation for University:

43. What percentage of each cohort in this school progresses to university?

Are you happy with this percentage? *About 20% of them and I think this is a reasonable percentage.* So you are happy with this percentage? *Yes.*

44. Do you have any plans to try to increase the percentage entering higher education? If yes, how might you achieve this? *No. 20% already means 100 students and there are hundreds of schools in Kuwait… you know the university could not accommodate more than this.*

45. Does the school advise or guide the students on what course they should take at university? If yes, who in the school provides this advice? In general, do students follow the advice? If not, why not? *Yes we do but in an informal way, I do myself and some teachers… we advise the bright students of science to go for medicine or engineering*

and I think that most of them follow our advice. How about the students of Arts? *Arts is not a big deal any college would do. Besides most of them are already unable to go to university… they prefer the army or the police more.*

46. What academic skills do you think the students need to succeed at university?

This question is unanswerable because there are too many skills… in fact they are the same skills needed to succeed in school. So what are the academic skills needed to succeed at school? *Being very good at reading and writing in both Arabic and in English that's a general skills and there are some skills that are important for science for example to be able to solve mathematical problems, knowledgeable in physics and chemistry and there too many skills that I cannot think of right now.*

47. What personal skills do you think the students need to succeed at university?

Personal skills mmm… distributing time properly between subjects, being self-motivated, patient and things like that.

48. Is preparing the students' for their studies at university an aim of this school? If yes, how does the school do this? If not? Why not? *To be honest with you, studying at university is not the primary goal of the school. Our primary goal is to prepare them for life in general and some of them are able to go to university and as I told you earlier being at university does not guarantee that you will be better. You can still be a good person as well as a good citizen without university. I did graduate from university but I cannot assume that I am better than anyone who did not.*

49. (If not already covered in Q.40), Does the school seek to develop the type of skills that the students will need at university? Prompt: e.g. independent learning; time management; essay writing; use of library; use of electronic resources etc.…

Yes we develop these skills but not especially for university… for life.

50. Do you keep in touch with your students once they have entered higher education? If yes, how? Why do you keep in touch? *I cannot keep in touch with them, but some students keep showing up after school graduation for a while then we do not see them again. Some of them say hallow if they see us outside… for example I always meet some my students accidently in the marketplace and we have a chat … I ask them where they have gone and they ask me whether I retired (laughter).*

51. In a latter phase of my study I found that private school students achieved better than public school students at university, why do you think private school students outperformed public school students? *Now I understood you, listen son… these schools are primarily meant to prepare their students for university, their mission is to export students to university and we are not… we try to cover and improve all the possible parts of a person but they do not, they only focus on the academic skills. I happened to know so many people who graduated from private schools… they are perfect… I mean academically speaking but most of them …I said most not all of course are socially stupid… most of them fail starting families or their own business. Now, you have to choose whether your son becomes socially smart with the possibility of going to university or being graduated from private school and is able to go to university with a high possibility of being socially stupid.*

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