Journal of Studies in International Education

http://jsi.sagepub.com/

Published by:
$SAGE

http://www.sagepublications.com

On behalf of:

ASİE

Association for Studies in International Education

A Cross-Cultural Investigation of Students' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Pedagogical Tools

The Middle East, the United Kingdom, and the United States

Abeer A. Mahrous
Ahmed Anis Ahmed
Cairo University, Egypt

Despite the growing number of international education programmes, students' response to various pedagogical tools used in these programmes has rarely been examined. Accordingly, business academics teaching on such programmes may not be sure as to which pedagogical tools to use. This study empirically investigates how various teaching tools affect undergraduate students' perception of the learning process. A self-administered survey was used to gather data from 461 undergraduate students in the Middle East, the United Kingdom and the United States. Findings demonstrate that the students from each region have a different opinion with regard to the impact of various teaching tools on their learning outcomes. The implications of this for business educators are discussed.

Keywords: *international higher education; teaching tools; student perceptions; Middle Eastern universities; U.K. universities; U.S. universities*

The increased internationalization of higher education, especially in such professional fields as business administration and information technology (IT), has become an important field of research (Hatakenaka, 2004; Kehm & Teichler, 2007; Teichler, 1999). Two major trends have shaped the international developments in higher education. One is the increased mobility of academics—Many business professors, for example, travel frequently to work on educational programmes (Clarke & Flaherty, 2002). The other is the rapid increase of international education programmes—either through programme mobility, delivering education

289

programmes in overseas countries, or institution mobility, setting up offshore campuses in countries overseas (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Hatakenaka, 2004). These trends have been largely motivated by (a) the desire of universities to improve their own international reputation, (b) the need to increase revenues due to fierce national competition for students and/or poor public funding in the home country, and (c) the desire of developing countries to enhance the quality of their educational system through foreign education (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Dobson & Holtta, 2001; Hatakenaka, 2004; Yonezawa, Akiba, & Hirouchi, 2009).

The countries most actively engaged in international education provisions are the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia (Bennell & Pearce, 2003; Hatakenaka, 2004), whereas the major countries interested in attracting foreign education/ educators are South West Asian and Middle Eastern Countries (Greene, 2008). In fact, the Middle Eastern countries, such as the United Arab Emirates (hereafter UAE) and Qatar are vigorously encouraging distinguished foreign universities to set up branches in their countries, while they urge their domestic universities to recruit foreign instructors, in particular especially those from the United Kingdom and the United States. Other Middle Eastern countries such as Egypt, Morocco, and Lebanon, are actively engaged in establishing joint undergraduate and graduate business programmes with foreign universities (Economic Intelligence Unit [EIU], 2007a, 2008).

Foreign instructors working in these settings are always concerned over the appropriateness of using abroad the pedagogical tools used in their home countries (e.g., case studies, discussions, computer simulations). The differences in students' learning styles, student and faculty interaction, and classroom culture between the Middle Eastern and Western learning systems imply that the pedagogical tools used in Western classrooms may not be suitable for Middle Eastern classrooms (Burt, 2004; Russell, 2004; Sonleitner & Khelifa, 2005). Nevertheless, a thorough review of the business education literature reveals that it gives little guidance on the best teaching methods to employ internationally. For example, some studies assert that the methods of instruction used in home universities can equally be used in host countries (e.g., Kaynak, Yucelt, & Barker, 1990), whereas others argue that business educators must adapt their teaching activities for overseas students (Clarke & Flaherty, 2002). Therefore, foreign educators and institutions working in the Middle East would benefit from understanding how students from Middle Eastern countries respond to the various teaching tools employed in business classrooms; this would better prepare them for teaching in these countries. Accordingly, the primary purpose of this research is to investigate and compare students' perceptions of various teaching tools in the Middle East, United Kingdom, and United States. The research also provides specific tactics for adapting teaching tools in these countries.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows. The first section describes some of the unique characteristics of the educational environment in the Middle East. The second section reviews the education literature concerning the selection of

pedagogical tools in international settings. The third section demonstrates the research methodology. This is followed by the Results and Discussion sections. Finally, the article concludes by discussing the implications and limitations of the study, along with suggestions for future research.

Education Environment in the Middle East[1]

The pedagogy in the Middle East, in public institutions in particular, depends almost solely on lectures, rote learning, and dictation (Chadraba & O'keefe, 2007; Richards, 1992; Tubaishat, Bhatti, & El-Qawasmeh, 2006). Teaching consists simply of illustrating concepts and reading from textbooks (Burt, 2004; Russell, 2004). Moreover, the assessment of students relies almost entirely on examinations. In fact, the Middle Eastern education system as a whole is an examination-oriented system that rewards the passive absorption of knowledge (Russell, 2004). Exams depend on memorizing facts and not on applying concepts. They rarely include questions requiring students to employ what they have learned to situations outside the classroom (Richards, 1992). This is in sharp contrast with the pedagogic and assessment systems in Western countries, such as the United States or United Kingdom, which usually focus on interactive education and exams/assignments that bring up more complicated practical problems.

In the pre-university stage, students in the Middle East are expected to regard teachers as an absolute authority and to work hard to meet their performance standards. Furthermore, students are not encouraged to learn about issues unless they directly affect their curriculum (Sonleitner & Khelifa, 2005), nor to engage as a rule in group or team activities (Burt, 2004). This educational background, along with the pedagogy and assessment style discussed above, translates among students a lack of problem-solving and communication skills and little experience of expressing what they think and feel or acting on their curiosity. In this situation, students prefer to be told what to study, which materials to read and what to pay attention to. They favour courses and lecturers that tell them exactly what to read, and offer short summarized sources as reading material (Burt, 2004). Moreover, students prefer readings to contain clear facts and information that can easily be memorized (Russell, 2004; Tubaishat et al., 2006).

Although similarities in teaching and learning styles between the Middle Eastern countries are expected because they share the same culture, language, religion, lifestyle, and behaviour, differences can also be found. The Arabian Gulf countries have better educational facilities than other countries in the Middle East. This is largely due to their high oil revenues and small populations (Rice & Mahmoud, 1996). Nevertheless, the education systems in the Arabian Gulf region still lag behind those in developed countries. The teaching methods and curricula are obsolete and the education system in general is weak (Federal Research Division, 2007). Therefore, many Arabian Gulf

students still travel abroad to study. Although a foreign university education offers Arabian nationals many benefits that the local education system cannot yet provide, the tendency to educate young people abroad is thought to undermine the effort to promote a sense of national identity (EIU, 2003, 2007b). This effort, combined with the increasing number of multinational organizations doing business in the region and the desire to replace expatriates with nationals, demands a high standard of education (Rice & Mahmoud, 1996; Taha, 2003).

Accordingly, many Arabian Gulf countries, such as the UAE and Qatar, began reforming their education systems to raise the quality of education. Changes in the curriculums of primary and secondary education were made to shift the emphasis away from religion/Islamic Law (Sharii'a) and the Arabic language to advanced mathematics, integrated science, and English (EIU, 2007b). In addition, many Arabian Gulf countries are pursuing vigorous plans to increase the number of their own universities and to persuade globally recognized international universities opening branch institutions abroad to choose them. For example, the UAE and Qatar have established educational cities, which are regions dedicated exclusively to bringing together distinguished foreign universities, training centres, and R & D companies in the same location and providing them with comprehensive advanced technological facilities and financial benefits (EIU, 2008). As of early 2008, these cities have attracted dozens of Western university campuses, which are already up and running. Examples in the UAE include Georgetown University, Texas A&M University (United States based), and the Sorbonne from France (EIU, 2007b).

Despite this, there are still sharp contrasts between the teaching and learning styles of the Middle Eastern and Western countries. This implies that curriculums and teaching methods of Western universities may need adaptation before being employed in the Middle East.

Selecting Teaching Tools for Overseas Education Programmes

Many teaching tools can be used to assist instructors in explaining concepts to students and to simulate business problems in practice. Instructors have always been concerned with choosing effective teaching tools that maximize students' learning. Therefore, there is a growing and varied body of research concerned with evaluating teaching tools to determine their effectiveness in achieving learning objectives, such as lecture notes and handout packages (Gray & Abernethy, 1994), class debates (Bonnici & Luthar, 1996), videotaped role plays (Jones & Javie, 1996), live case studies (Owen, 1999), internships (Gault, Redington, & Schlager, 2000), simulations (Brennan, 2008), experiential learning (Gremler, Hoffman, Keaveney, & Wright, 2000; Kennedy, Lawton, & Walker, 2001; Smith & Van Doren, 2004), cooperative testing (McIntyre, Thomas, & Jones, 1999), student-operated businesses (Daly, 2001;

Russell-Bennett, 2008), and course Web site and online discussions (Clarke, Flaherty, & Mottner, 2001; Helmi, Haynes, & Maun, 2000; Jaworski, 2008).

Another group of related studies focus on examining the relative effectiveness of the broadened array of teaching tools available for business education. For example, Karns (1993) investigated students' perceptions of the relative effectiveness of 12 teaching tools commonly employed by marketing educators. The most effective learning tools, from students' perspective, were discussion, client projects, and guest speakers, whereas the least effective were multiple-choice tests and term papers. Furthermore, Karns (2005) compared students' perception of the relative effectiveness of traditional educational tools with the new technology-based educational tools, such as course Web sites and online discussion. His findings show that internships, class discussion, and case analysis are seen by students as the learning tools that most contribute to their learning. Course Web sites and online discussion are seen as less effective in contributing to student learning. Moreover, some studies have considered the relative effectiveness of multiple rather than individual teaching tools used in marketing education. Generally, they find that marketing students prefer active, applied, pedagogies involving the world beyond the classroom, such as field trips, internships, case analysis, and live case projects (Davis, Misra, & Van Auken, 2000; Taylor, Humphreys, Singley, & Hunter, 2004).

From a different perspective, some studies argue that students' preferences for specific types of pedagogy are explained by their learning styles. For example, Morrison, Sweeney, and Heffernan (2003) identified four learning styles and students' preferred pedagogies: the sensate, visual, sequential, and active styles. Sensate students prefer pragmatic, fact-oriented teaching tools such as live case projects. Visual students favour pictures, diagrams, videos, and so forth and respond to group work and video cases but not to guest speakers. Sequential learners favour activities that follow a logical progression and do not respond to the low profile of structure present in most group work and in-guest speaker appearances. Finally, active learners prefer active teaching tools, such as discussion, problem solving, group work, and online resources. Nevertheless, a recent exploration of the effect of learning style differences on the perceived effectiveness of 21 teaching tools shows that intensive course customization to accommodate individual differences of learning style is not warranted. Rather, educators "can sufficiently meet the needs of students by providing a range of learning experiences that tap multiple learning modalities" (Karns, 2006, p. 56).

In a similar vein, another group of studies argues that the choice of teaching tools should primarily be based on the type of learning objective (e.g., Bonner, 1999; Karns, 2005). Learning objectives involving simple skills can be achieved with fairly passive teaching tools, whereas learning objectives involving complex skills require teaching tools that stimulate students to learn more actively. Knowledge and comprehension objectives, for example, can be attained by lectures/or readings (or both, for reinforcement), answering short essay questions requiring definitions or

lists of facts, and multiple-choice questions. In contrast, learning objectives aiming at developing management decision skills and applying knowledge can be attained only by advanced tools, such as case studies, live case projects, and student-operated businesses.

In spite of the significant insights of the previous literature about the selection of teaching tools, the question of which teaching tools to use in overseas education programmes remains unresolved. Only a few studies have been concerned with exploring and comparing students' perceptions in different countries of the effectiveness of various educational tools. Generally, the findings show differences between such perceptions among students in Western countries, such as the United States and Canada, and perceptions from other countries, such as those of South East Asia (e.g., Clarke & Flaherty, 2002; Kaynak et al., 1990).

However, study results based mainly on Western students cannot be extended to generalize students' behaviour in other parts of the world, due not least to cultural and educational differences. For example, the passive and dependent attitude of Middle Eastern students (Burt, 2004; Richards, 1992; Rugh, 2002) conflicts with the argumentative and active habits of Western students. Therefore, the pedagogical tools and approaches proven to be effective in Western countries may not be very effective in Middle Eastern countries (Smith, 2006). However, little—if any—research has hitherto considered students' perceptions of pedagogical tools in the Middle East region. Accordingly, this study seeks to explore students' perceptions of the impact of various pedagogical tools on their learning from an international standpoint. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

Are there significant differences in the perception of the effectiveness of various pedagogical tools among students from the Middle East, the United Kingdom, and the United States?

What are the most relevant pedagogical tools to improve the perceptions of learning among students in the Middle East, the United Kingdom, and the United States?

Method

This research, like previous research, relies on students' self-reports of how much they believe a particular pedagogical tool contributes to their learning to measure the degree of perceived effectiveness of the tool.

A list of 21 teaching tools in contemporary use was developed and then modified after consulting academics working in the countries under study. The final list named 17 teaching tools, which are described in the appendix. The research used a self-administered survey to collect data in the classroom setting. The survey first asked students to indicate their perception of the effectiveness (the degree to which

Table 1
Sample Characteristics

Variable	Middle East	United Kingdom	United States	Total Sample
n[a]	188 (40.7%)	133 (28.8%)	140 (30.4%)	461 (100%)
Gender				
Male	84.6 (45%)	67.7 (51.7%)	71 (50.8%)	217.6 (47.2%)
Female	103.4 (55%)	65.4 (48.4%)	69 (49.2%)	243.4 (52.8%)
Age	19.03 (6.31)	21.18 (8.21)	20 (7.51)	20.28 (6.32)
Employment status[a]				
Not employed	35.9 (19.1%)	6.1 (4.6%)	11.2 (8.0%)	53.2 (11.54%)
Full time	147.9 (78.7%)	110.9 (83.4%)	115.2 (82.3%)	374.2 (81.19%)
Part time	3.9 (2.1%)	15.9 (12.0%)	13.5 (9.7%)	33.4 (7.27%)
Student status[a]				
Full time	188 (100%)	131 (98.5%)	140 (100%)	495 (99.56%)
Part time	—	3 (1.5%)	—	2 (0.44%)
GPA[b]	3.11 (0.49)	3.67 (0.18)	3.58 (0.21)	3.37 (0.32)

Note: GPA = self-reported grade average point.
a. Frequency and percentage.
b. M (SD).

a teaching tool contributes to learning) of these major educational tools on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 signifies *not effective at all* and 5 signifies *very effective.* Self-descriptive information was then gathered in the final section of the survey to classify the sample (e.g., gender, employment status etc.). Typically, the survey was distributed during the last class of the term to ensure that students had been fully exposed to the various teaching tools examined. Students were asked to return the completed questionnaires the following day. Generally, the return rate was about 90%. The survey questionnaire was administered in the English language in all the countries under study; the students were all selected from undergraduate programmes taught in English to ensure a proper grasp of the meaning of the questions and to avoid the chance of misunderstanding.

A convenience sample of 461 undergraduate students in various business administration courses at eight business schools in the United States, the United Kingdom, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE was drawn during class time before the final examinations in the spring term. The sample included (a) 92 from two universities in Egypt, (b) 54 from one University in the UAE, (c) 42 from two universities in Saudi Arabia, (e) 140 from two universities in the United States, and (f) 133 from two universities in the United Kingdom. Table 1 presents the sample characteristics. The sample was composed of primarily full-time undergraduate students who worked part time (averaging 21.7 hr/week). The divisions of gender, student status, ages within the age range, and self-reported grade average point were about even.

Table 2
Differences in Perceptions of Teaching Tools Among Countries Under Study

| | Country of Residence for Respondents | | | | |
| | Middle East | United Kingdom | United States | ANOVA | |
Teaching Tools	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	F	p
Lecture	4.67 (0.92)	4.39 (1.39)	4.54 (0.13)	2.011	.682
Lecture outline and handouts	4.96 (1.43)	4.73 (1.06)	4.87 (1.10)	1.513	.212
Guest speaker	3.02 (1.27)	3.61 (0.072)	4.19 (1.06)	20.061	.042
Video case	3.18 (1.29)	4.12 (0.090)	4.25 (1.43)	10.121	.039
Case analysis	3.29 (1.15)	4.15 (1.18)	4.27 (1.27)	7.351	.033
Group project	4.76 (1.00)	4.75 (1.52)	4.80 (1.05)	1.161	.561
Academic readings	3.81 (1.04)	4.51 (1.34)	4.10 (0.85)	5.613	.009
Practitioner readings	3.25 (1.28)	4.35 (1.39)	4.41 (1.06)	12.013	.040
Homework	4.12 (1.38)	3.22 (1.18)	3.18 (1.25)	11.529	.035
Role-playing	3.60 (1.46)	3.75 (1.54)	4.06 (1.10)	9.561	.038
Field trips	2.41 (1.34)	3.15 (1.37)	3.04 (0.72)	7.128	.032
Diary	2.51 (1.16)	3.03 (1.31)	3.11 (1.04)	15.021	.035
Computer simulation	3.12 (1.30)	4.09 (1.35)	4.12 (1.33)	7.219	.017
Term paper	3.56 (1.12)	4.45 (1.30)	4.08 (1.44)	6.493	.041
Multiple-choice test	3.92 (0.84)	3.84 (1.20)	3.91 (0.65)	2.103	.414
Essay test	2.53 (1.67)	2.69 (1.40)	2.95 (1.12)	0.519	.513
Online communication	4.31 (1.11)	3.97 (1.34)	4.00 (1.29)	9.315	.026

Results

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to assess the differences in the perceived effectiveness of the teaching tools between the countries under study. Table 2 shows the mean scores, standard deviation, F values, and p values for each teaching tool examined. The overall between-country differences and the relative differences between each country on the specific teaching tool are also presented in Table 2. The results show that there are significant differences in the perceived effectiveness of each teaching tool between the countries under study. As the ANOVA F values in Table 2 indicate, the countries examined exhibit significant differences ($p < .05$) for guest speaker, video cases, case analysis, field trips, diaries, role-playing, online communication, computer simulation, academic readings, practitioner readings, homework, and term papers. The ANOVA F values in Table 2 also show that between the countries studied there are no significant differences for lectures, lecture handouts and outlines, group projects, multiple-choice tests, and essay tests.

To refine the analysis, Hochberg's GT2 multiple comparison test was employed to determine the nature of the group differences. This multiple comparison procedure

helps to determine, within each teaching tool, which country's score means are significantly different from the others. Hochberg's GT2 test is more appropriate than any other multiple comparison test when sample sizes are unequal (Field, 2005), as is the case in this study.

Hochberg's GT2 analysis reveals that the United Kingdom had significantly higher scores ($p < .05$) for academic readings and term papers than the United States and the Middle Eastern countries. The United States showed significantly higher evaluations ($p < .05$) for video cases, guest speakers, role playing, diaries, and field trips than the United Kingdom and the Middle Eastern countries. With regard to diaries and field trips, the scores for all countries were low; however, they were lower for the United Kingdom and the Middle Eastern countries than for the United States. The United Kingdom and the United States grouped together perceived case analysis, computer simulation, and practitioner readings to be more effective ($p < .05$) than did the Middle Eastern countries. The Middle Eastern countries considered homework and online communication more important ($p < .05$) than did the United States and United Kingdom. Finally, for lectures, lecture outlines and handouts, group projects, multiple-choice questions, and essay questions, no significant differences emerged between groups (although the Middle Eastern countries at the .10 level show significant differences in the importance they place on lectures, and lecture outlines and handouts).

Discussion

The results show that from the 17 teaching tools commonly used in teaching various business courses in the United Kingdom, United States, and the Middle East, only 12 teaching tools were found to have a significantly different impact on students' perceptions of learning in the countries under study. This indicates that instructors should vary their use of these teaching tools from country to country. Other teaching tools (lectures, lecture handouts and outlines, group projects, multiple-choice tests, and essay tests) were not found to have a significantly different effect on the learning outcomes in these three regions. Therefore, the major implication is that business educators may expect relatively similar perceptions of learning among students exposed to these tools.

To interpret these results, a number of educators with teaching experience in the countries under study were consulted. Their insights are integrated with the findings of this study and discussed in the following subsections.

Lectures and Lecture Outlines

In the three locations examined, lectures were perceived by students as important vehicles for learning. Personal interactions between students and instructors are still

a crucial aspect of the learning process throughout the world. One possible explanation is that the personal encounter with instructors helps to motivate students and gives them the opportunity to clarify vague concepts or ideas.

Interaction between students and educators is of special importance in the Middle East because students are used to learning through traditional lectures where instructors explain subjects, give study notes, and raise questions to evaluate the understanding of the subject (Russell, 2004). In connection with lectures, lecture outlines and handouts are offered; the study findings indicate that students in the countries studied like to receive lecture outlines and handouts from educators. Receiving lecture outlines is very much favoured by United Kingdom and Middle Eastern students because they are responsible for taking their own notes during class (Clarke & Flaherty, 2002; Russell, 2004).

Reading and Homework

The United Kingdom rated academic reading higher than did the United States and Middle Eastern countries, whereas the United States and United Kingdom rated practitioner readings higher than they were rated in Middle Eastern countries. These findings imply that Middle Eastern students do not favour additional academic or practitioner readings. This is because students in passive learning environments such as the Middle East rely on instructors to summarize all the required readings. In fact, they are used to receiving and repeating information rather than searching for it or making inferences based on specific readings (Sonleitner & Khelifa, 2005; Tubaishat et al., 2006). Moreover, most of the readings are in English and some of the students, especially in the Arab Gulf countries, are not fluent in English. Therefore, more readings in English represent a burden on already suffering students (McBride, 2004).

An additional problem with assigning readings to Middle Eastern students is the lack of practitioner readings about local business issues. Therefore, students may spend some time in a search for relevant practitioner materials but end up with little or nothing to read; this is frustrating for the students who have wasted valuable time and received little in return. This is in sharp contrast with the case of the U.K. and U.S. learning systems. The U.K. learning system is based on readings and discussion in class, and in the United States, students like better to listen to the insights of a practitioner than to be limited to theoretical views. Thus, additional readings relevant to the subject are highly valued because they add a practical dimension to theoretical concepts (Clarke & Flaherty, 2002).

With regard to homework, the Middle Eastern students' ratings were significantly higher than the United Kingdom and United States. This is perhaps because having their homework evaluated provides Middle Eastern students with direction and constant feedback on their efforts. However, the Middle Eastern learning system has long been criticized for the poor quality and quantity of feedback on homework

(Richards, 1992). In addition, students always complain that they are under time constraints and do not have long enough to complete homework (McBride, 2004).

Case Analysis and Video Cases

Experience is the best teacher and the case study method provides students with more experience than any other teaching tool (Burns, 1990). Case analysis introduces students to the conditions of decision making at work, which include insufficient data, time constraints, and conflicting goals. Case studies stimulate students' thinking, challenge their capabilities, and prepare them for future managerial decision making. This is why case studies are used in many business schools around the world. Despite that, the findings of this study show that there are significant differences in the students' perceptions of the effectiveness of case studies in the countries under study; the U.S. and U.K. students rated case studies higher than did the Middle Eastern students.

This can be interpreted in the context of the problems that students face when dealing with cases; for example, they are confused about what is expected of them, lack the practical experience that would help them to analyze cases, and face time constraints and anxiety arising from a learning technique that may not deliver a right answer (Chadraba & O'keefe, 2007). These problems can be even more difficult and challenging in Middle Eastern undergraduate classes, particularly those who have inherited passive learning systems, because they accustom students to direct questions and answers and do not routinely assign practice cases.

Guest Speakers and Field Trips

Guest speakers and field trips were moderately rated by all countries, but they were perceived by U.S. students as more important vehicles to learn than was conceded by the U.K. and Middle Eastern students. In fact, Middle Eastern students perceive these activities as fun activities, treats, and time out from learning. However, the U.S. students favour these activities because the viewpoints of practitioners, and industry or governmental experts provide them with valuable information about the dynamics of the world of work and conditions of the labour market. The insights gained from guest speakers can provide useful practical additions to the theoretical information.

Multiple-Choice Tests and Essay Tests

The study findings did not find any significant differences between the countries examined with regard to the perceptions of the effectiveness of multiple-choice tests and essay tests. This is in contrast with the long-held assumption that Middle Eastern students favour multiple-choice questions over essay questions

because multiple-choice questions present a selection of answers and students have only to guess which is right. This reduces the fear and anxiety that students feel during the stressful period of examinations (Burt, 2004). Furthermore, the moderate English language skills of Middle Eastern students, in particular in the Arab Gulf countries, may hinder students from writing in a cohesive way, or discussing and linking concepts, as required in essay writing (McBride, 2004).

Group Projects and Term Papers

Group projects were perceived by students in all the countries studied as an important teaching tool. Perhaps, this is because students often find group work interesting, if the logistics can be worked out. In addition, if group work follows some individual preparation, it can be a useful method of learning because students benefit from each others' insights and experiences (Burt, 2004).

With regard to term papers, the scores of U.K. students were significantly higher than those of the United States and the Middle East. The U.K. learning system is centred on assigning readings, discussing them in class, and writing a paper or an essay about specific topics. Therefore, U.K. students are used to writing term papers and may perceive them as a useful way to evaluate or extend their comprehension of a subject. However, as indicated earlier, students in the Middle East are used to more direct assignments. Also, their limited English writing skills lead to more emphasis on correct English according to the language rules than on the comprehensive and cohesive analysis of the term paper's topic.

Internet Communications and Computer Simulation

The students' ratings for online communication with educators were high in all the countries examined. However, the responses showing students' preference for online communication in the Middle East were significantly higher than those for the U.S. and U.K. students. This could be explained by the availability of fast Internet connection for students on campus and sometimes at home (Walters & Lydiatt, 2004); hence, online communication represents an additional and convenient access to instructors. They help students to clarify ambiguous concepts or assignments and receive quick feedback. Strauss and Frost (1999) also indicated that online communication is useful in developing written communication skills.

Finally, the U.K. and the U.S. students rated computer simulation higher than did the Middle Eastern countries. Perhaps, this is because Middle Eastern students are not used to active learning through computer technology; hence, they may be anxious because they are unfamiliar with the skills required to gather and filter virtually limitless amounts of data in a nonsequential learning environment (Burt, 2004).

Implications for Business Educators

This study provides initial guidance for educators who wish to teach in overseas education venues, in particular in the Middle East, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The findings show that students from each country have their own opinions on the impact of various teaching tools on learning outcomes. Therefore, when designing courses for students overseas, instructors should first identify the appropriate teaching tools to use in each place. The findings demonstrate that some teaching tools are universally accepted and effective. These are lectures, lecture outlines and handouts, group projects, multiple-choice questions, and essay questions. Hence, instructors are advised to begin with these tools. Other tools (guest speakers, video cases, case analysis, role playing, online communication, computer simulation, academic readings, practitioner readings, homework, and term papers) should depend on the specific countries where they are to be used.

Another important recommendation of this study is that business educators can alter students' perception of pedagogical tools by carefully explaining the value of their pedagogical choices in preparing them for their future. Pedagogical tools, such as group projects, case studies, and role-playing, will add value to the students; such things give them the opportunity to express themselves, to make decisions, to enjoy the companionship of their peers, and to improve their employability. In sum, business educators should help students see the alignment between the course design (learning objectives and teaching tools) and the students' own goals for their future. This is especially important to educators teaching in the Middle East, because students who are rarely exposed to such active learning activities as case studies and projects may be reluctant to participate in them. Therefore, explaining the benefits of using active learning tools, after preparing students to participate through earlier coursework and maintaining a balanced workload, would improve students' perceptions of active learning tools.

Finally, specific teaching tips for educators wishing to teach in the countries studied are provided in Table 3.

Limitations and Future Research

One possible limitation of this research is the reliance on students' perceptions, not on objectively measured learning outcomes. Although students' perceptions of teaching tools are important, because they indicate students' willingness to engage in the learning process, it is recommended that future research should directly assess the learning outcomes of different teaching tools. Such research would provide clear and comprehensive guidance to educators in selecting their pedagogical tools. Furthermore, the findings of this study were based on undergraduate students' perceptions and should not be generalized beyond that because the

Table 3
Suggested Tactics to Improve Learning in the Middle
East, the United Kingdom, and the United States

Country	Tactics to Enhance Learning[a]
The Middle East	Focus on the linkage between topics
	Develop skills rather than cover materials
	Encourage discussions that involve the whole class
	Summarize important points at the end of the class to allow students studying in their second language to recover materials
	Discuss time management skills with students
	Give students clear and thorough feedback on their homework
United Kingdom	Introduce more active teaching methods to the traditional teaching system that focuses on lectures and readings
	Distribute lecture outlines that link between topics and concepts
	Encourage students to incorporate practitioners' publications and views into their assignments
United States of America	Use guest speakers to present topics whenever possible
	Encourage discussion among peers
	Spend quality time on developing analytical skills required for case analysis
	Use wide array of active learning methods
	Highlight the link between related topics
	Use technology-based teaching tools whenever appropriate

a. These tactics are based on discussions of the findings with educators who have teaching experience in these countries.

perceptions of undergraduate students do not necessarily reflect the views of alumni and postgraduate students. Therefore, further research examining alumni and postgraduates' perceptions would augment the findings of this study. In addition, although thorough attention has been given to develop as representative a list of teaching tools as possible, future research may wish to add more teaching tools to this list. Finally, future research should address other concerns of educators in foreign educational settings, such as student classroom behaviour and faculty/ student interaction expectations.

Conclusion

This study attempted to shed light on the differences in student's responses in different countries to various teaching tools, a somewhat underresearched area in the business education literature. It is hoped that the insights gained from this study will be useful to educators when designing courses in international educational settings, especially in the regions of the Middle East, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Educators should be aware of students' responses to educational tools so that course-design decisions can

be more thoughtfully made and students' satisfaction improved by choosing the teaching tools that optimize the learning experience of students.

Appendix
Description of Pedagogical Tools Examined in This Study

Pedagogical Tools	Description
Lectures	Oral presentation by the instructor to teach general rules or principles and provide examples to students
Academic and practitioner readings	A set of readings from books and academic or professional journals that are to be discussed later in the lecture and to be tested in exams
Guest speaker	Guest speakers with expertise in specific fields address the class and answer students' questions
Lecture outline and handouts	Paper hard copies and online power point lecture outlines
Film/video cases	Videos about relevant subject areas are played and discussed during class time
Case analysis	Students are given data about a specific situation and are asked to answer some questions about it in the form of written case reports, presentations, or class discussions
Group project	Students work in groups to write a report or a plan about an existing or a future company
Homework	Assignments to be completed outside of class, mostly at home
Field trips	A visit to a factory, firm, and so on, made by students and their instructor(s) for purposes of firsthand observation
Diary	A daily record of events, experiences, or observation about a specific subject or event
Role-playing	Students pretend to occupy the role of another person in a specific situation to examine the person and/or the situation
Multiple-choice test	For each question, the test taker is supposed to select the best choice among a set of four or five options
Essay test	A test where answers to questions are written in paragraph form
Online communication	Communications with instructors and other students through e-mails and online discussions
Term paper	A written work discussing a specific topic in detail, usually several typed pages in length. Often due at the end of a semester
Computer simulation	Students are exposed to computer-simulated situations, whereby student groups make periodic decisions; the decisions provide the inputs to a software package that produces management information (such as profit and loss statements and analyses of sales patterns) that provides the basis for the next round of decision making

Note

1. This review focuses on the specific Middle Eastern countries of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE, and Kuwait because these countries are currently the most actively engaged in establishing partnerships with foreign universities.

References

Altbach, P., & Knight, J. (2007). The internationalization of higher education: Motivations and realities. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 11*, 290-305.

Bennell, P., & Pearce, T. (2003). The internationalization of higher education: Exporting education to developing and transnational economies. *International Journal of Educational Development, 23*, 215-232.

Bonner, S. (1999). Choosing teaching methods based on learning objectives: An integrative framework. *Issues in Accounting Education, 14*, 11-39.

Bonnici, J., & Luthar, H. (1996). Peer evaluated debates: Developing oral communication skills through marketing case studies. *Marketing Education Review, 6*(summer), 73-81.

Brennan, R. (2008, July 6-9). *Student experiences of the use of a marketing simulation game.* Paper presented at the Academy of Marketing Annual Conference, Aberdeen, Scotland, UK.

Burns, A. (1990). The use of live case studies in business education: Pros, cons, and guidelines. In J. Gentry (Ed.), *Guide to business gaming and experiential learning* (pp. 201-214). London: Nichols/GP.

Burt, J. (2004). Impact of active learning on performance and motivation in female Emirati students. *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Gulf Perspectives.* Retrieved July 23, 2008, from http://www.zu.ac.ae/lthe/archive.html

Chadraba, P., & O'keefe, R. (2007). Developing graduate marketing programs for economies in transition. *Journal of Marketing Education, 29*, 218-223.

Clarke, I., III, & Flaherty, T. (2002). Teaching internationally: Matching part-time MBA instructional tools to host country student preferences. *Journal of Marketing Education, 24*, 233-242.

Clarke, I., Flaherty, T., & Mottner, S. (2001). Student perceptions of educational teaching tools. *Journal of Marketing Education, 23*, 169-177.

Daly, S. (2001). Student operated internet businesses: True experiential learning in entrepreneurship and retail management. *Journal of Marketing Education, 23*, 204-215.

Davis, R., Misra, S., & Van Auken, S. (2000). Relating pedagogical preference of marketing seniors and alumni to attitude toward the major. *Journal of Marketing Education, 22*, 147-154.

Dobson, I., & Holtta, S. (2001). The internationalization of university education: Australia and Finland compared. *Tertiary Education and Management, 7*, 243-254.

Economist Intelligence Unit. (2003). Saudi Arabia: Education [EIU ViewsWire]. New York: Author.

Economist Intelligence Unit. (2007a). Egypt: Education [EIU ViewsWire]. New York: Author.

Economist Intelligence Unit. (2007b). UAE: Education [EIU ViewsWire]. New York: Author.

Economist Intelligence Unit. (2008). *Qatar: Education* [EIU ViewsWire]. New York: Author.

Federal Research Division. (2007). *Country profile: United Arab Emirates.* Washington, DC: Library of Congress. Retrieved December 5, 2007, from http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/UAE.pdf

Field, A. (2005). *Discovering statistics using SPSS* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

Gault, J., Redington, J., & Schlager, T. (2000). Undergraduate business internships and career success: Are they related?. *Journal of Marketing Education, 22*, 45-53.

Gray, J., & Abernethy, A. (1994). Pros and cons of lecture notes and handout packages: Faculty and student opinions. *Marketing Education Review, 4*(fall), 22-26.

Greene, J. (2008). Why Arabian Gulf countries donate to U.S. universities. *FrontPage Magazine.* Retrieved June 9, 2008, from http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles

Gremler, D., Hoffman, D., Keaveney, S., & Wright, L. (2000). Experiential learning exercises in services marketing courses. *Journal of Marketing Education, 22*, 35-44.

Hatakenaka, S. (2004). Internationalism in higher education: A review. *Higher Education Policy Institute.* Retrieved June 14, 2008, from http://www.hepi.ac.uk/pubdetail.asp?

Helmi, D., Haynes, G., & Maun, C. (2000). Internet teaching methods across the disciplines. *Journal of Applied Business Research, 16*(4), 1-13.

Jaworski, P. (2008, June 11-13). *Enhancing student learning through the introduction of a WebCT-based continuous assessment scheme.* Paper presented at the 15th EDiNEB Conference, Málaga, Spain.

Jones, D., & Javie, S. (1996). Anxiety level and causes in personal selling videotaped role plays. *Marketing Education Review, 6*(spring), 19-26.

Karns, G. (1993). Marketing student perceptions of learning activities: Structure, preferences, and effectiveness. *Journal of Marketing Education, 15*, 3-10.

Karns, G. (2005). An update of marketing student perceptions of learning activities: Structure, preferences, and effectiveness. *Journal of Marketing Education, 27*, 163-171.

Karns, G. (2006). Learning style differences in the perceived effectiveness of learning activities. *Journal of Marketing Education, 28*, 56-63.

Kaynak, E., Yucelt, U., & Barker, A. (1990). Internationally oriented marketing curriculum development: A comparative study of Canada, the U.S.A. and New Zealand. *Journal of Marketing Education, 12*, 53-63.

Kehm, B., & Teichler, U. (2007). Research on internationalization in higher education. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 11*, 260-273.

Kennedy, E., Lawton, L., & Walker, E. (2001). The case for using live cases: Shifting the paradigm in marketing education. *Journal of Marketing Education, 23*, 145-151.

McBride, D. (2004). Becoming more culturally aware in the university classroom: Advice from a faculty member teaching in the Gulf region. *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Gulf Perspectives.* Retrieved June 13, 2008, from http://www.zu.ac.ae/lthe/archive.html

Mclntyre, F., Thomas, J., & Jones, R. (1999). Cooperative testing in the marketing classroom. *Marketing Education Review, 9*(summer), 45-51.

Morrison, M., Sweeney, A., & Heffernan, T. (2003). Learning styles of on campus and off-campus marketing students: The challenge for marketing educators. *Journal of Marketing Education, 25*, 208-217.

Owen, R. (1999). Using programmed branching to automate interactive cases on the Web. *Marketing Education Review, 9*(fall), 41-60.

Rice, J., & Mahmoud, E. (1996). Trends in international business thought and literature: The Arabian Gulf countries. *International Executive, 38*, 715-730.

Richards, A. (1992). *Higher education in Egypt* (Policy Research Working Paper Series). Retrieved July 18, 2008, from http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/ WDSContentSer...d/PDF/multi_page.pdf.

Rugh, W. (2002). Arab education: Tradition, growth and reform. *Middle East Journal, 56*, 396-414.

Russell, A. (2004). Zayed university students' teaching and learning beliefs and preferences: An analysis based on the surface versus deep learning approach. *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Gulf Perspectives.* Retrieved July 23, 2008, from http://www.zu.ac.ae/lthe/archive.html

Russell-Bennett, R. (2008, 6-9 July). *MARKETopia: Assessing the effectiveness of student operated businesses for a simulated world.* Paper presented at the Academy of Marketing Annual Conference, Aberdeen, Scotland, UK.

Smith, L. (2006). Teachers' conceptions of teaching at a Gulf university: A starting point for revising a teacher development program. *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Gulf Perspectives.* Retrieved July 23, 2008, from http://www.zu.ac.ae/lthe/archive.html

Smith, L., & Van Doren, D. (2004). The reality-based learning method: A simple method for keeping teaching activities relevant and effective. *Journal of Marketing Education, 26*, 66-74.

Sonleitner, N., & Khelifa, M. (2005). Western-educated faculty challenges in a Gulf classroom. *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Gulf Perspectives*. Retrieved July 23, 2008, from http://www.zu.ac.ae/lthe/archive.html

Strauss, J., & Frost, R., (1999). Selecting instructional technology media for the marketing classroom. *Marketing Education Review, 9*(spring), 11-20.

Taha, A. (2003). *UAE universities embark on Web-based ETD service: Vision and inspiration*. Unpublished master thesis, United Arab Emirates University, Al-Ain.

Taylor, S., Humphreys, M., Singley, R., & Hunter, G. (2004). Business student preferences: Exploring the relative importance of Web management in course design. *Journal of Marketing Education, 26*, 42-49.

Teichler, U. (1999). Internationalization as a challenge for higher education in Europe. *Tertiary Education and Management, 5*(1), 5-23.

Tubaishat, A., Bhatti, A., & El-Qawasmeh, E. (2006). ICT experiences in two different Middle Eastern universities. *Issues in Informing Science and Information Technology*. Retrieved July 24, 2008, from http://informingscience.org/proceedings/InSITE2006/IISITTuba153.pdf

Walters, T., & Lydiatt, S. (2004). Teaching, technology, and the modern classroom. *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Gulf Perspectives.* Retrieved July 23, 2008, from http://www.zu.ac.ae/lthe/archive.html

Yonezawa, A., Akiba, H., & Hirouchi, D. (2009). Japanese University Leaders' Perceptions of Internationalization: The Role of Government in Review and Support. *Journal of Studies in International Education*. Retrieved February 12, 2009 from http://jsi.sagepub.com/pap.dtl.

Abeer A. Mahrous is an assistant professor at Cairo University, Egypt. She received her PhD degree according to a joint supervision program between Cambridge University, United Kingdom, and Cairo University, Egypt. She has extensive research and consultancy experience, specializing in the areas of Internet marketing and business education. Last year, she was a visiting professor at George Washington University School of Business, Washington, D.C.

Ahmed A. Ahmed is an assistant professor at Cairo University, Egypt. Prior to that, he was an auditor at the Central Accounting Organization, Egypt. He has carried out extensive research and consultancy work in the fields of auditor's legal liability and corporate governance. He is actively involved in many educational and training programs sponsored by Egyptian and foreign agencies, such as European Union and USAID.