Quality International Schools in Kuwait?
History, Ideology, and Practice

Mohammed Kamel Ibrahim

A thesis in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

July 2018
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<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>Advanced Placement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASK</td>
<td>American School of Kuwait</td>
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<tr>
<td>BBS</td>
<td>Bayan Bilingual School</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBS</td>
<td>Community Bilingual School</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIBS</td>
<td>Cultural Identity Bilingual School</td>
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<td>CIS</td>
<td>Council of International Schools</td>
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<td>CMI</td>
<td>Contextualised multiple intelligences</td>
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<td>ECIS</td>
<td>European Council of International Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>Grade point average</td>
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<tr>
<td>HOD</td>
<td>Head of Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSP</td>
<td>High School Principal</td>
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<td>IB</td>
<td>International Baccalaureate</td>
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<td>IBS</td>
<td>Inclusion Bilingual School</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KD</td>
<td>Kuwaiti dinar</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAP</td>
<td>Measures of Academic Progress</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSA</td>
<td>Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>MUN</td>
<td>Model United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEASC</td>
<td>New England Association of Schools and Colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>Professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT</td>
<td>Scholastic Aptitude Test</td>
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<td>SAT</td>
<td>Standard Admission Test</td>
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<tr>
<td>TES</td>
<td>The English School</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organization</td>
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Glossary

International schools

Some of the criteria of International schools are adopting international curriculum, teaching international culture and perspectives, instilling an international mindedness, teaching wholly or partly in English outside an English-speaking country, and accredited by international accreditation bodies (such as CIS or IBO). In the context of Kuwait, American, British, international, bilingual, Canadian, or German schools are considered international schools according to the Ministry Of Education (MOE) in Kuwait. In relation to this study, all these schools are dealt with as international schools because these schools meet some or all criteria described above.

International bilingual schools

International bilingual schools in Kuwait are part of the international schools in Kuwait and may meet some or all the criteria that described for the international schools. In addition to the international curriculum (American, British, IB, etc.), the International bilingual schools adopt the local Arabic curriculum designed by the Ministry Of Education (MOE) in Kuwait. These schools, in Kuwait, focus mainly on educating students in English and Arabic languages. According to the MOE, International bilingual schools should be accredited by international accreditation bodies (such as CIS or IBO).

International education

International education is the concept of education that develops international mindedness, recognizes the universal human values, stimulates curiosity and inquiry in learning, focuses on learning skills to acquire knowledge locally and internationally, provides international material content and flexible teaching methods, and follows appropriate international standards and assessment forms.

International accreditation

International accreditation is a quality assurance process where education services and operations of educational institutions and schools are evaluated by international accreditation bodies (such as CIS and IBO) to decide if certain quality standards are met. If all necessary standards are reached by such schools and institutions, then certification is given to them as a proof of competency and credibilty.
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to ‘Iman’

The faith that I chose and trusted

The gentle soul that Allah had written for me

The destiny that reached by duā, heart, and mind

Grateful for your faith, understanding, encouragement, and continuous support

Jazaki Allah Khair
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First and foremost, I thank Allah Almighty for facilitating the commencement of my PhD at WSU and enabling me to complete this thesis. Throughout this study, I encountered many obstacles that required patience and perseverance. It was not a smooth journey due to the sensitivity of the research and its context. I was unsure whether I could accomplish this study with such depth and quality, but thanks to Allah Almighty, it was made possible and became a reality.

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Special thanks to all participants in this study. This study is distinguished by the extraordinary number of people at all levels who participated. Their willingness to take part in this study and answer all questions without hesitation made my study possible. I am indebted to the school administration and institutional directors for answering my questions and allowing me access to their staff and facilities. Without this transparency, my study would not have been possible.

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THANK YOU
Abstract

This study investigates the quality of education in three international (bilingual) schools\(^1\) in Kuwait. Little is known about the situation of these schools, which are increasing exponentially. These schools not only have a significant role at the local level but also worldwide as they are connected globally through many networks, and by producing graduates who attend universities around the world. This qualitative, interpretive, research presents the perspectives of stakeholders involved in international bilingual schools in Kuwait. The researcher interviewed students, parents, high school teachers, academic counsellors, coordinators (curriculum, accreditation and professional development (PD)), high school principals (HSPs), directors (superintendents), chairpersons, a Ministry of Education (MOE) director, and a Council of International Schools (CIS) director. Listening to the voices of stakeholders at different levels presented a comprehensive view of the quality of education in these schools, because, according to Cheng (2003) quality assurance of education involves many interconnected elements. Some of these elements include the teaching and learning process, internal and external evaluation of these schools, expectations of parents and stakeholders, accountability measures and educational policies set by the state, and curriculum. To investigate these elements in three accredited bilingual schools in Kuwait, the study focuses on four main areas: (i) the rapid growth of such schools in Kuwait; (ii) reasons why Kuwaiti parents choose these schools and whether their expectations are met; (iii) the influence of international accreditation agencies on evaluating and improving this kind of schools in Kuwait; and (iv) the role of the Kuwait MOE in monitoring the academic performance of students and ensuring the quality of education in these schools. In addition to the education quality assurance conceptual framework (Cheng, 2003), cosmopolitanism and neoliberalism theoretical frameworks are used to frame the interpretation of participants’ insights and findings of the analysis. Neoliberalism is used to explain the relationship between profit making and market

\(^1\) International schools and international bilingual schools are used interchangeably in this study because the international bilingual schools are part of international schools in Kuwait and focus of this study is on the international accreditation standards, international curriculum, and MOE policies which are the same and similar for both kinds of schools (international and bilingual) in the context of Kuwait.
elements, as well as the rapid growth of such schools in Kuwait. Through neoliberalism, the effect of national educational policies on increasing the numbers of these schools in Kuwait are clarified, and the understanding of the influence of international accreditation in relation to the privatisation of education through them is defined meaningfully. Cosmopolitanism is used to explain Kuwaiti parents’ perspectives of such education and the value of investing in their children’s future by enrolling in these schools. It also clarifies the role of international accreditation in supporting intercultural understanding and the globalist current of international education in the schools in this research.
Chapter One: Introduction

In the last three decades, the number of international schools in Kuwait, whether American, British or bilingual, has risen exponentially. This started after the Gulf War and continued to the present time. The number of Kuwaiti parents who are choosing these schools as an alternative to government schools, which are free of charge, to invest in their children’s education is increasing noticeably. Courses in these schools are taught mostly in the medium of English language. This investment is valued by parents as they aim to prepare children for post-secondary studies and increase their skills to compete locally and globally for better careers. A large proportion of Kuwaiti parents are financially able to enrol their children in such schools because Kuwait is one of the richest countries in the world and citizens’ incomes are among the highest in the world. All international schools in Kuwait, whether American, British or bilingual, are operated independently; the MOE in Kuwait has limited policies to monitor and evaluate the education process and outcomes of these schools. This thesis aims to investigate the quality of education provided by three international bilingual schools, as part of international schools, in Kuwait. It does this primarily through gathering feedback from interested stakeholders. The research will focus on certain areas related to the main theme of the study. Three fundamental areas include: (i) parents’ choices of international bilingual schools in Kuwait and whether these schools have met their expectations; (ii) national educational policies regarding monitoring and evaluating these schools; (iii) international accreditation value and role in ensuring the quality of international (bilingual) schools in Kuwait.

This introductory chapter presents the research context and addresses the significance of the research problem. It also discusses the purpose of the research and its relevance to local and international contexts. Furthermore, research questions are introduced, along with the connection between the principal research question and its sub-questions, and how they contribute to a comprehensive picture of quality in international (bilingual) schools in Kuwait. Next, the significance of the research is explained in relation to the overall lack of research into the standard of international schools in Kuwait. Finally, an overview of the
conceptual framework, which is used to interpret the participants’ perspectives is presented, followed by a brief explanation of the research literature and methods. Chapter One concludes with a brief description of the thesis structure.

1.1 Research problem and justification

I taught in international bilingual schools in Kuwait at elementary, middle and high school levels for many years. During that period, in addition to teaching, I was involved in the accreditation process and committees. As an educator, I noticed what appeared to me to be a low standard of education provided by these schools and accordingly, what I considered, the low quality of their graduates, who found it difficult to cope with the Western universities level they joined. This experience led me to question the status of international education and conditions in international (bilingual) schools in Kuwait, the impact of Western policies and practices of these schools in this context, the level of professionalism that exists and the quality of education in such schools. This history stands behind my interest in the main elements in this research into the quality of education in international (bilingual) schools in Kuwait.

This thesis stems from the fact that “the study of international schools (in general) is relatively recent” (Hayden, 2011, p. 212), in spite of its “central role in the globalised economy” (Hayden, 2011, p. 214). In Kuwait and the surrounding region, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the study of international education and international schools is even more limited. Despite extensive searches, it has been difficult to find any studies about international schools in Kuwait, or even a public register with detailed information about these schools. According to ISC Research, the number of international schools is growing at 8% annually around the world (Bunnell, 2008). A similar trend also exists in Kuwait as the number of international schools (American, British, bilingual, IB) is increasing rapidly. In the last two decades, more than 50% of international schools in Kuwait were established, and new schools continue to emerge every year. They are often established by private companies or by individuals as businesses with minimal supervision by or involvement from qualified educators. Policymakers have designed qualification criteria for teachers
who can work in international schools, as well as general policies or procedures relating to all educational organisations, but there is no thorough government monitoring of the curriculum or the quality of education in these schools (Kuwait Pocket Guide.com, 2015). This situation prompts many questions and requires closer examination of important issues relating to the impact of Western policies on identity, culture and quality, and the effectiveness of teaching and learning in these schools. Such issues include the rapid growth of international schools and the social change arising in association with this growth, as well as the ideological basis of these schools and their effect on local policies and cultures.

An important part of this research is directed towards the accreditation process of these schools and how accrediting agencies are seeking to assure the quality of education. Accreditation grants status in society to international schools in Kuwait, enabling them to gain a good reputation, attract more students, and eventually increase their resources. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate the basis of the accreditation of international schools in Kuwait, the efficiency and validity of this process of monitoring the quality of education in these schools.

1.2 Importance of the study

The originality of this research stems from its contribution to knowledge in understanding how international education in Kuwait is impacted by global agendas. This is the macro level of analysis that has not been researched before in Kuwait. The aim here is to gain insight into the impact of Western policies and practices (curricula) in a non-Western context on identity, culture, language and quality of education. This combines both meso (institutional) and micro aspects (individual or interactionist elements). The reasons for the increase of international schooling in Kuwait have not previously been made clear, nor have parents’ rationales for sending their children to these global establishments been determined (micro level). By using a cosmopolitan perspective, the aim is to discover if the reasons are related to future orientations for their children. Another original contribution to knowledge is in relation to the method as different categories of participants have been
considered in this research. These categories are students, parents, teachers, curriculum coordinators, accreditation coordinators, PD coordinators, academic counsellors, principals, superintendents (directors), chairpersons, the MOE director, and the CIS director. Their perspectives will contribute to a better understanding of the situation of international (bilingual) schools in Kuwait.

Despite the rapid growth in these schools, currently numbering 47, and the social and economic importance of this sector locally and globally (Tate, 2016), there seems to have been a lack of interest from individual researchers, international education organisations and even local educational policymakers (Ministry of Private Education) in conducting any sort of research that would serve as a basis for educational policymakers and the local government to take critical decisions regarding this vital sector. This education sector is not only important because of its economic effect, but because of its more significant social impact on the identity and culture of local citizens and Kuwait (Tate, 2016).

The research project will be of great value locally and globally. In the context of Kuwait and the surrounding region, this research will offer an analysis of the operation of these schools and how they are different to local public schools. It will address the level of quality in the schools under study so that local citizens and policymakers can begin to rectify any issues that arise. It will serve as a starting point for local researchers and education experts to investigate and deal with sensitive concerns regarding the ideology of these schools and their effect on social and student futures. This study will assist educational policymakers in designing a suitable educational policy for these schools. These may include matters related to curriculum and quality, so parents’ expectations might be achieved and academic standards improved. The study will analyse the process and procedures of accreditation and evaluate the measures taken to ensure quality of education and academic performance, and therefore suggest measures to modify the criteria of accrediting and certifying international schools in Kuwait and globally.
1.3 Research questions

Regarding international schools in Kuwait, there are many elements that have played major roles in their activities and functions. Western curricula and systems, international accreditation, parents’ choices of certain international schools, and national educational policies are mostly, in relation to this study, the main areas that could explain the situation of this influential education sector in Kuwait. The aim is to investigate these areas to understand and find answers that aid in assessing the quality of education in such schools in Kuwait.

Research question

What priorities govern the development of international schools in Kuwait?

Supporting sub-questions

1. What core factors contributed to the emergence and rapid growth of international schools in Kuwait?

2. Why do some Kuwaiti parents choose international schools for their children? To what extent do their experiences meet their expectations?

3. How do considerations around international accreditation influence the organisation and practice of international schools in Kuwait?

4. How do international schools respond to requirements from official bodies, such as the Kuwaiti Ministry of Education (MOE) and demands for ‘quality education’ in international schools in Kuwait?

These questions are designed in this form to encompass all areas of the research problem and match the purpose of investigating major factors influencing the development of international schools in Kuwait.

These factors are represented in, firstly, the answers of the sub-questions and, secondly, finding the nature of relationships between them. This will aid in understanding how
international schools in Kuwait are impacted by local and global factors and agendas. The principal research question is about gathering data relevant to the function and efficiency of international schools in Kuwait. This data will describe their growth, efficacy, social and cultural impact, their educational policies and educational practice.

The first supporting sub-question seeks information about the history and growth of international schools in Kuwait. The second supporting sub-question relates to the reasons that motivate parents to choose such schools as an option for educating their children. The third supporting sub-question deals with the international academic standards and performance monitored by the international accreditation organisations. The fourth supporting sub-question relates to the policies and regulations taken by the MOE to ensure effectiveness in meeting local and international standards of education quality. This part represents the central role that the MOE is supposed to play in Kuwait, where accountability procedures should be in place for evaluating and monitoring the education process in international schools.

1.4 Conceptual framework

In this study, cosmopolitanism and neoliberal theoretical frameworks, and education quality assurance conceptual frameworks (Cheng, 2003) are used to frame the interpretation of participants’ perspectives and to interpret the findings of the analysis. These interpretations are necessary because they link the study of international schools in Kuwait to theories and conceptual frameworks that constitute a better understanding and meaning of the main elements of this study: (i) quality of education; (ii) parents’ choices of international schools; (iii) international education and curriculum; (iv) international accreditation value and effect; and (v) accountability and the role of MOE in monitoring these schools in Kuwait.

These frameworks are interrelated in more than one area of the study and they construct clear links to the main research themes. For example, through neoliberalism, the relationship of the establishment of new international schools in Kuwait and the market
basis and/or profit-making situation could be explained. Neoliberalism also looks at the role of local government educational policies in facilitating the establishment of international schools in Kuwait. It is also used in this study to clarify the role of international accreditation in relation to international schools in Kuwait and the privatisation of education in these schools. On the other hand, cosmopolitanism, in this study, explains the role of international accreditation in facilitating the intercultural understanding and pragmatic ‘globalist’ current of international education in relation to the economic and cultural globalisation (Cambridge & Thompson, 2004). It is also used to explain parents’ perspectives in this study, of international education and investment in their children’s future by enrolling them in international schools. As regards the education quality assurance conceptual framework (Cheng, 2003), it was the most appropriate framework to analyse the quality of education in this research because it suits the qualitative research methodology used in this study and the kind of data (interviews) that gathered by the researcher. Many aspects in this study may be clarified through the use of this framework. It explains the nature of the relationship between experiences and qualifications of staff and students’ academic achievements. It aids discussion about the relationships between parents’ expectations, MOE policies, international accreditation procedures, parental involvement and the quality of education in international bilingual schools in Kuwait. It is also used in the discussion of key characteristics of effective teaching and learning methods, and the importance of local (Arabic) and international curricula in contributing to the quality of education in international bilingual schools in Kuwait.

1.5 Research literature

There are many interconnected areas in a study of international schools in Kuwait, therefore, a wide range of literature needs to be reviewed. These areas include globalisation, English language, international curriculum, national educational policies, international accreditation, and the history and ideology of international schools.

In relation to globalisation, literature focuses on its effect on international education and international schools, and how that has influenced the global spread of international
schools. The English language is discussed as being a global language that plays a key role in increasing the popularity and importance of international schools. After that, a literature review of the nature of international schools and their history is discussed, which reveals main factors behind the exponential increase of international schools globally and in Kuwait. A literature review of the curricula and education systems of international schools is also undertaken in relation to the pragmatics and ideology of international schools, their pedagogy, the PD of staff, and student assessment. These elements are essential to an understanding of the situation and quality of education in international schools in Kuwait. The next focus of the literature review is the educational policy, which addresses the effect of globalisation on educational policy worldwide, especially regarding the effect of global organisations on international educational policies, Kuwait’s educational policies and international schooling in Kuwait. The last section of the literature review is related to the international accreditation of international schools. This section is an important part of the literature review because of the major role of international accreditation agencies in monitoring and evaluating international schools in Kuwait. Therefore, the areas of research that are given attention in this section are the international accreditation organisation roles, international accreditation in the Kuwaiti context, international accreditation efficiency, values of accreditation, and MOE policies regarding the accreditation of international schools in Kuwait.

1.6 Research methodology

In this study, a qualitative research approach is used to explore the experiences and perspectives of all stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, counsellors, coordinators, principals, directors, chairpersons, an accreditation agency director, and the MOE department manager) involved in the education process of international schools in Kuwait. This approach is used because it suits the nature of this study, where the focus is on the schools’ contexts and the interpretation of emergent data from interviewing the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). Through an interpretive approach of qualitative research, it is possible to reach an understanding of the situation of international bilingual schools in this study. Interviewing participants of different categories, such as students and teachers with
varied experiences and backgrounds is necessary for this study as the quality of education in international schools in Kuwait involves many different parties and several connected issues. These interviews will uncover multiple realities in the shape of quotes and themes resulting from participants’ perspectives (Creswell, 2007). The epistemological stance that is adopted in this research is a constructivist epistemology, where truth is arrived at as a result of engaging with realities in our world (Crotty, 1998). As part of this engagement, the researcher of this study lived in Kuwait and worked in two of the international bilingual schools under study for many years, therefore, he is very familiar with the context of international schools in Kuwait. In addition, he spent seven months in these schools interviewing and collecting data. As an ‘inside’ researcher, his role in understanding the participants’ experiences is facilitated (Fay, 1996). In this study, a social constructivist paradigm is used to deal with various views and meanings collected from participants about international bilingual schools in Kuwait and to generate a pattern of meaning (Creswell, 2007). According to this paradigm, the researcher’s interpretation of participant views plays a major role in constituting the emerging meaning of the quality of education in international bilingual schools in Kuwait.

Ethnography is used as a qualitative approach in this research project because it enables the construction of a holistic perspective of a situation. This requires observation, close listening and the collection of richly informative data on the nature, circumstance and context of these schools (Reeves, Kuper, & Hodges, 2008).

For this study, three bilingual international schools in Kuwait (CBS, CIBS and Inclusion Bilingual School (IBS)) have been selected as sites of research, through a criterion sampling strategy (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 1984). Although they are the key sites of research, this study is concerned with the broader context of the phenomenon of international schools in Kuwait, therefore, these schools will be considered to inform this discussion.

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2 The schools’ names and all participants’ names are pseudonyms.
A total of 66 participants, including 29 females and 37 males from diverse social categories are chosen to share their experiences in relation to certain research areas. All participants, except students, will be interviewed through semi-structured interviews to explore perceptions and gain a better understanding of the case studies. For students, focus group interviews will be used so they can share their learning experience in international bilingual schools in Kuwait. Generally, the interview questions seek information about six main topics: (i) history and rapid growth of international schools; (ii) parents’ choice and satisfaction; (iii) curriculum and school system; (iv) national education system; (v) accreditation and accountability policies; and (vi) quality of education in these schools.

In regard to data analysis, an inductive thematic manner is used, in which codes, categories, patterns and relationships that are expected to emerge from the data gathered from the participants are identified and classified. As themes are developed, the next step will be to analyse and interpret the data in order to make sense of what occurs in the schools. This analysis will be divided into three analysis chapters, in which each school is considered in a separate chapter. This will be followed by a final discussion (cross-analysis) chapter to present the findings resulting from the analysis of the three schools’ case studies. These findings, which are related to answers of the research questions, will be presented in a narrative form to deliver a better understanding of stakeholders’ perspectives regarding the quality of international schools in Kuwait. Cosmopolitanism and neoliberalism theories and quality assurance of education conceptual framework will be used in the findings chapter to provide a structure for interpreting the findings.

1.7 Thesis structure

Chapter One provides a brief description of the research problem and its justification, significance of the study, research questions, conceptual framework, research literature, and research methodology of this study.

In Chapter Two, a review of the literature regarding the effect of globalisation on international education and international schools is undertaken. It will consider the English
language as a global language and its key role in increasing the popularity of international schools. International curriculum and the pragmatics and ideology of international schools will be considered, along with globalisation and the global organisation of international and national educational policies. Also of significance is the role of international accreditation and the effect of this on international schools, alongside the history and practice of international schooling in Kuwait.

Chapter Three explains the theoretical frameworks that underpin this research study. The concepts of cosmopolitanism, neoliberalism and education quality assurance will be used to guide the research through almost all aspects of the study to explore, describe and interpret the situation of international schooling in Kuwait.

Chapter Four provides a detailed explanation of the research methodology and paradigm. First, the research method used in the investigation in this study is described, followed by discussing and justifying the qualitative ethnography approach that is used in this research. Next, the design of the study is explained, which includes the research methodology, conduct of the research, research theme and questions, contexts and samples, interview collection, data analysis and research ethics.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven will comprise of analysis chapters of three schools in this research. They present the findings from each school separately, to be merged into a detailed analysis and interpretation as a single case study. The findings and interpretations of the analysis are presented in similar themes in all these case studies but have different stories, content and evidence embedded in each theme.

Chapter Eight provides the findings that emerge from the previous three analysis chapters. It presents a detailed discussion of cross-case analysis and interpretations in which the commonalities and differences that arise from the three case studies (CBS, CIBS and IBS) are compared and presented to connect the evidence to the findings in accordance to the research questions. In this discussion, key findings are linked to theoretical frameworks and the literature review to gather findings and interpret them in connection to
cosmopolitanism, neoliberalism and education quality assurance. The cross-case findings are discussed using the same themes that are used in all case studies in Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

Chapter Nine contains the summary, reflections and conclusion of the study. It provides a summary of the thesis and self-reflection on the assumptions underpinning the study. The chapter discusses the significance of the results and implications of the educational policy and practice of international schools in Kuwait. Recommendations for future research are suggested at the end of this chapter.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The topic of international schools is broad and diverse with many interconnected factors that affect the establishment and overall running of such institutes. Generally, issues around globalisation, the English language, international curriculum and the education system, national educational policies, and international accreditation of international schools are among the most significant factors connected to international schools and international education. This research focuses on these areas, in addition to the core subject of this research, that is, the history, ideology and practice of international schools in Kuwait. In this chapter, a review of the literature covering these areas is conducted and discussed in a hierarchical manner that is appropriate to the research questions.

This chapter comprises of an initial discussion of the effects of globalisation on international education and international schools, and how they have influenced the global spread of international schools. English, as a global language, is discussed in relation to its key role of increasing the importance and popularity of international schools. A detailed explanation of the nature of international schools and their history is necessary because it reveals information relevant to factors behind the growth of international schools globally and its connection to the rapid increase of international schools in Kuwait. One important section of Chapter Two focuses on the curriculum and education system of international schools. It looks at the pragmatics and ideology of international schools, their pedagogy, the PD of staff, and student assessment. These areas are at the core of this research study as it is difficult to understand the situation and quality of education of international schools in Kuwait without comprehending these elements. Next, the educational policy section addresses the effect of globalisation on educational policy worldwide, how global organisations affect international educational policies, and Kuwaiti educational policies in general and how they affect international schooling in Kuwait. The last section of the literature review focuses on the accreditation of international schools. It is an important part of this research due to the major role of international accreditation agencies in evaluating
and monitoring international schools in Kuwait. Attention is given to research that seeks to explain the international accreditation organisation’s roles, international accreditation in the Kuwaiti context, international accreditation efficiency, values of accreditation, and MOE policies regarding accreditation of international schools in Kuwait.

2.2 Forces of globalisation and education

The concept of globalisation has been described as:

A growing magnitude or intensity of global flow such that states and societies become increasingly enmeshed in worldwide systems and networks of interaction. As a consequence, distant occurrences and developments can come to have serious domestic impacts, while local happenings can engender significant global repercussions. (Held & McGrew, 2000, as cited in Hayden, 2011, p. 211)

One network of interaction is international education and international schools. In a context of globalisation “the international school represents an important object of inquiry for theorizing schooling” (Tarc & Mishra Tarc, 2015, p. 34). Globalisation has had a major effect on this sector worldwide, especially in the last few decades, as will be seen in the discussion that follows.

Forces of globalisation increased the demand for international education and international schools in the beginning of the 21st century by making international education a high profile ‘brand’: a necessity to be sought by young people worldwide (Hayden & Thompson, 2016) if they plan to achieve a better future. Parents of middle-class and upper-middle-class students “are increasingly aware of the transnational scope of optimizing schooling and career trajectories for their children” (Tarc & Mishra Tarc, 2015, p. 35). It has been argued that through international education, young people can be prepared for life in a globalised world where there are no more traditional ways to face the new world. Instead young people face an “unprecedented range of choices about how to live their lives” (Tate, 2016, p. 28). The number of these young people, elites, has continued to increase due to the expansion of global capitalism, which boosts their position and “reduces
the gap in some cases between ‘developing economies’ and more ‘advanced’ economies, and takes large numbers of people out of poverty” (Tate, 2016, pp. 19-20). ‘Internationalisation’ of education can take many shapes: an increase in global mobility of students at the tertiary level, transnational higher education growth, the spread of e-learning and global educational programs and services, and the widespread use of ‘global league’ educational performance tables. A country’s ranking in global tables can be boosted through adopting ‘international education’ programs that may affect the national education system positively (Tate, 2016). Walker (2016) explained that forces of globalisation have caused the rapid growth of international schools and this has, in turn, challenged national education systems to an unprecedented scale. He argued that entrepreneurs have invested in a strong emerging market of international schools that caters for students from wealthy middle-class families who are dissatisfied with their national education systems and “parents opt for an English and more Anglo-American education as a form of academic capital” (Tarc & Mishra Tarc, 2015, p. 36). In international schools, parents seek high-status alternatives to the national education system in the form of prestigious international or English programs, such as the International General Certificate of Secondary Education. Many of these new international schools are established by international organisations that have raised the capital necessary to build new schools or upgrade existing ones. Such organisations manage their activities from headquarters in Dubai, Shanghai, Mumbai, or other geographic hubs. Examples include Global Education Management Systems in Dubai, which manages 71 schools in 14 countries; Nord Anglia Education in Hong Kong, which manages 35 schools around the world; and Cognita in the United Kingdom (UK), which runs 66 schools worldwide. Furthermore, as a force of globalisation, the recruitment of appropriately trained and qualified English-speaking teachers has become a major issue. In addition to the pursuit of quality education, access to the world’s prestigious universities is a major factor that causes students to join international schools because they seek to acquire globally-recognised qualifications to facilitate their admission into well-credentialed universities.
One additional major force of globalisation that has caused a rapid growth of English-language international schools is the global circumstances that have led to English becoming the dominant language globally (Hayden & Thompson, 2016).

2.3  **English as a global language**

As a global language, English has become a vehicle in globalisation and the building of a responsible, cosmopolitan citizenry. “It is the language of globalisation – of international business, politics and diplomacy” (Johnson, 2009, p. 131). It is practical to have a common language to facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences between global citizens. English has become that language.

In most international schools, the principal medium of instruction and communication is English. Due to “the overriding power of World English in the global economy, media, academy, entertainment, etc., EFL (English as a Foreign Language) education has become a crucial curricular element in the educational systems of developing societies” (Guilherme, 2007, p. 72). English is the most common language in the world, therefore, it is used in all fields globally to communicate and exchange ideas and experience. Generally, it can be seen to assist effective functioning across all areas.

Many factors, such as information technology, help strengthen the globalisation of the English language. Before the information technology era, the main factor promoting English as a global language was the emergence of the United States of America (USA) after the Second World War II as the only Western superpower that had relatively undamaged educational, scientific and political systems. “Therefore, the United States, helped by its allies, had power in reorganising the world through the creation of the United Nations” (Abdullah & Chaudhary, 2012, p. 131). In addition, English was considered one of four official languages spoken in the United Nations (UN), which gave it stronger status in the world (Abdullah & Chaudhary, 2012). The strong status of English politically, scientifically and economically helped it become the main global language.
Thus, learning English has become a necessity for many citizens around the world. “English language learning has therefore been portrayed … as a fundamental tool that unquestionably brings professional success” (Guilherme, 2007, p. 72). However, Guilherme (2007) also stated that English language learning has been portrayed as the “one that oppresses us under capitalism, neoliberalism and the global market” (p. 72). Both statements have strong bases and have been researched extensively, but the principal argument here is that “we manipulate (the English language) in our everyday lives while communicating with more immediate or more remote contexts and (it) has been penetrating our minds and bodies deeper and deeper” (Guilherme, 2007, p. 74).

With the development of electronic technology worldwide, the use of the English language has increased significantly, and citizens of the world have improved their interaction globally. “The English language definitely cuts across national boundaries more than any other language and is an icon of the contemporary age. It is undoubtedly the language of the cosmopolitan/global professional elites” (Guilherme, 2007, p. 74). The importance of English should be acknowledged generally and specifically in travelling abroad, career development, knowledge enhancement and economic success.

As a consequence of the English language being a global medium of communication, it has become a priority for many capable citizens and local elites around the world to educate their children in prestigious institutes for them to acquire the English language fluently through endorsed educational programs. For example, gaining popularity worldwide is the international education system. Tate (2016) explained that “international education, especially when offered through the medium of English, has … proved attractive to local elites who have seen fluency in English, plurilingualism and access to English-language higher education as a means to advancement” (p. 19). It is considered an advantage for a host country to produce a cadre of high school graduates who are fluent in the English language and hold an international education certificate. This increases the student’s chance to enrol in, and graduate from, a prestigious university around the world. The return of these graduates to their home country is thought to contribute to a country’s economic competitiveness (Tate, 2016).
In recent years, the English medium of international education was a major factor in the rapid growth of new international schools that catered mostly for “a new and expanding group of local consumers: middle-class families in countries such as India, the United Arab Emirates and China who are dissatisfied with the quality of the indigenous education” (Walker, 2016, p. 37). In fact, the International School Consultancy Group (ISC Research)\(^3\), a private consultancy group and provider of data and intelligence on the world's K-12 English-medium international schools, argued that delivering a curriculum wholly or partly in the English language in a non-English speaking country is essential in order for such schools to be called ‘international’ (Walker, 2016).

### 2.4 International schools

Teaching and learning the English language has taken various forms in different countries, societies and communities. Some policymakers have chosen courses of a limited duration, as is the case of public schools in the Gulf region, including Kuwait, and have realised initial language learning outcomes. Others, mostly in the private sector, have established educational institutes, as in the case of international schools, where programs and curricula aim to teach and acquire the language with near-native fluency. In this research, the focus will be on international schooling that teach with, and through, a high level of English language learning, and its functioning as a cosmopolitan capital in Kuwait.

As mentioned earlier, the education sector is one area affected by globalisation. The education sector includes both the national system of education, which has been affected by the internationalisation of local educational policies, and the international school sector, which has been growing dramatically since the turn of the century (Tarc & Mishra Tarc, 2015). This project focuses on international schools in Kuwait. They are attracting increasing numbers of students drawn from the local education system, as parents seek to

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\(^3\) The International School Consultancy Group (ISC) was founded and launched privately in 1994 as a company to provide data, research and consultancy services on the international schools market sector. The data is gathered from governments, international schools and market experts. It provides a range of services and products that help to establish international school and develop its business. International schools and groups, developers and investors, specialist education suppliers and providers, education associations and higher education institutions use ISC data and services (ISC Research, 2019).
provide a better future for their children in local and global markets. Additionally, these schools play an important and “central role in the development of the knowledge economy” (Coulby & Zambeta, 2005, p. 1).

It is significant that international schools have “evolved first in practice before giving rise to a growing research approach” (Hayden, 2011, p. 213). A similar situation is repeated in Kuwait, but to a larger extent, such that it is difficult to find any research about international schools in Kuwait. “The precise origins of international schools are debated” (Hayden, 2011, p. 214), but it appears that the major movement towards establishing such schools started after the First World War. In 1924, two schools were founded: (i) International School of Geneva; and (ii) Yokohama International School (Hayden, 2006, 2011; Knight, 1999; Stanworth, 1996; Walker, 2016). They were established to receive children of expatriate diplomats and employees of transnational organisations.

After the Second World War, the number of international schools increased rapidly as a result of an increase in the mobility of expatriate professionals globally and also, to a lesser extent, a decrease in the preference for boarding schools (Hayden, 2011). Many schools started with low student numbers and little space; they were run cooperatively by parents to fulfil the urgent need of educating their children (Hayden, 2006). Afterwards, the number of international schools continued to grow across the world (Tate, 2016). During the 1960s, the international school sector rapidly grew to a point where it was necessary to introduce and develop a secondary educational program for students from different nationalities and backgrounds to join and “move schools without undue disruption to their studies and (to) gain internationally recognised certification for their achievements as a basis for entry into higher education” (Tate, 2016, p. 19).

However, “the first mentions of international schools can be found in the 1964 Yearbook of Education, where Bereday and Lauwerys (1964) suggested that around 50 international schools existed worldwide” (Hayden, 2011, p. 214). One notable fact regarding the growing number of international schools and their effective role in the global economy was that “they actually existed before the term globalisation came into common usage as it was
not until the 1960s and early 1970s that the term ‘globalisation’ was used” (Held & McGrew, 2000, p. 1).

In the second half of the 20th century, the number of international schools began to rise due to “increasing professional mobility, ease of travel and the desire of parents for their children to travel with them rather than remain in boarding schools in the home country” (Hayden & Thompson, 2016, p. 10). Despite the diversity of the system, curriculum, student nationalities and background, and size of these emerging international schools, the majority of schools used English as the medium of instruction and followed a not-for-profit policy (Hayden & Thompson, 2016).

However, “the past decade has seen major changes in the landscape of international schooling” (Bunnell, 2016, p. 17) and huge growth has been recorded in ‘new’ international schools that “are providing an English-medium education for the children of local middle-class families who have acquired sufficient wealth to afford to pay school fees” (Walker, 2016, p. 39). This growth has occurred in response to the demand of local middle-class parents and not traditional expatriate parents (Walker, 2016). Historically, expatriate parents played a major role in establishing ‘traditional’ international schools and running them on a not-for-profit basis, but new international schools that had grown considerably in recent years, are commercially focused and run by individuals or business investors on a for-profit basis (Hayden & Thompson, 2016). These new international schools have been “largely created for the growing middle classes (national elites) of countries with emerging economies … (and are) in a strong position owing to their sheer number to influence the direction of the local national education system” (Walker, 2016, p. 49). According to the International Schools Consultancy Group, the number of local students in new international schools has continued to grow steadily, estimated to represent 80% of students in these schools (Tate, 2016), as Hayden and Thomson (2016, p. 12) confirmed:

In the late 20th century, the ratio of expatriates to host national students in international schools was approximately 80%: 20%. By 2016, the ratio has reversed, with some 80% of international school students now from the
affluent, aspirational middle classes in those countries where international schools are authorised to accept the country’s own citizens.

This change in the ratio of local students has occurred in many countries, especially developing ones, due to growing dissatisfaction with the quality of the national educational system (Walker, 2016). An example is in Thailand, where nationals were not previously allowed to join international schools, but after deregulation, there was “an explosion in numbers to the point that in 2016 there were around 120 international schools in that country” (Hayden & Thompson, 2016, p. 12). Similarly, in Kuwait, “85% of international schools … have been established” (Reid & Ibrahim, 2017, p. 269) in the last two decades, when deregulation was introduced by the MOE after the Gulf War in 1990.

However, Walker (2016) argued that if such institutes claim to be ‘international schools’, they should provide international education that “reflects the characteristics that have been developed over many years by pioneering international schools seeking to translate the vision of a better world into the reality of a school curriculum” (Walker, 2016, p. 50). In reality, according to ISC Research in 2012, approximately 3500 out of 6400 international schools offered a national curriculum rather than an international curriculum, such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme, International Primary Curriculum, or Cambridge International Examination curriculum (Walker, 2016). That is why some ‘traditional’ international schools, committed mainly to catering for children of expatriate parents, raised many questions about the quality of international education offered at these new international schools (international pretenders), and whether they have the right to be called ‘international schools’ (Walker, 2016). Bunnell (2016) commented on this issue, “international schools, in general, are being placed under pressure as institutions to legitimize their claim to be an ‘international school’” (p. 17).

There is no worldwide authority to determine whether a school has the right to call itself ‘international’, and there is no specific “definition of what merits the description of an international school”. According to Hayden and Thompson (2016), this “has been one of the factors prompting researchers to attempt to bring order to the diverse range of schools
that might be considered to belong to that grouping” (Hayden & Thompson, 2016, p. 11). Regarding this matter, Hayden and Thompson (2013) proposed a new categorisation of international schools as “the categorisations of the 1960s to 1980s no longer apply” (Hayden, 2011, p. 215). Hayden and Thompson proposed that there are three categories of international schools: (i) Type A represents traditional international schools established mainly to cater for students of expatriate parents, of different nationalities, of high levels mobility, communicating in English language, and these schools run on a not-for-profit basis (Bunnell et al., 2017); (ii) Type B represents international schools more focused on ideological principles (committed to the philosophy of Kurt Hahn and global peace education (Bunnell et al., 2017)) and not established in a response to market forces; and (iii) Type C represents new international schools that aim to cater for local students, and are managed on a for-profit basis. Type C, according to Hayden and Thomson (2016), incorporates different sub-types that could stand on their own merit.

Examples of Type A international schools are American and British overseas schools that were established mainly to educate children of expatriate professionals through the medium of the English language, similar to what it is taught in their home country. In Kuwait, many American and British schools were established to cater for children of diplomats and globally-mobile expatriate parents. An example of a Type B international school is United World Colleges, but there is no clear example of this category in Kuwait. Examples of Type C international schools are those unaffiliated to a specific nation, offering international education through the medium of the English language to students of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and preparing them for university entrance internationally. Practically, these schools “were the beginnings of the notion of education as a global commodity, constrained by catering within one school for children from many different backgrounds, languages and ultimate aspirations, but sharing in common the need for a form of education other than that offered locally” (Hayden, 2011, p. 215). Another sub-category exemplifying Type C international schools are international bilingual schools that offer “a genuinely bilingual model of international education (MacKenzie, 2001), or a model of cosmopolitan education” (Bunnell, 2008, p. 423). The attraction to these schools
for local parents is, not only motivated by the desire to access a prestigious commodity, but also the hope that their children will attend prestigious Western universities. These parents consider this kind of education a form of capital that will provide social status and secure a better future for their children. According to Bourdieu (1986),

Capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as economic capital, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights; as cultural capital, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications; and as social capital, made up of social obligations (‘connections’), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility. (p. 47)

Actually, as a result of the rapid growth in the number of these schools in Kuwait and globally, international bilingual schools would form a major category (Type D) and not a sub-category of type C as Hayden and Thompson (2013) proposed. This type of schools became very popular as they guarantee for parents to keep the local cultural identity and language of the students in addition to acquiring international language (English) and prepare them well to join Western universities abroad.

The precise number of international schools is not known, but a glance at estimates, starting with a conference organised by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for principals of international schools in 1949, reveals that 15 principals attended the conference (I. Hill & Hayden, 2010, p. 20, as cited in Walker, 2016, p. 38). In 1964, 50 international schools existed, according to Bereday and Lauwerys (1964), increasing to 372 listed international schools in 1969 (Leach, 1969), and further increasing to over 1000 in the 1990s, according to Hayden and Thompson (1995). By 2009, Brummitt estimated the number of such schools to be 5200 (Hayden, 2011). In 2013, according to ISC Research, there were 6400 international schools (Walker, 2016). In 2015, ISC Research indicated more than 8000 international schools around the world, teaching approximately 4.26 million students (Walker, 2016). Furthermore, the ISC Research predicts that by 2025, an estimated 15,100 international schools will be teaching close to
8.26 million students if the current trend and pace continue (Tate, 2016). “The countries leading the international schools’ market are China (with 530 schools), the United Arab Emirates (511), Pakistan (439), India (411), Saudi Arabia (245), Japan (233) and Spain (203), while another 15 countries have more than 100 ‘international schools’ each” (Walker, 2016, p. 38).

These numbers are clear evidence of the importance of this sector, which MacDonald (2006) describes as “a global multi-billion dollar industry” (Hayden, 2011, p. 218). The impact and outcome of such an industry on national education systems “seems likely to become increasingly marked” (Hayden, 2011, p. 217), and if the prediction of ISC Research proves true, “international schools have a rosy future” (Tate, 2016, p. 32).

One important point to revisit here concerns market forces that are major factors in the rapid increase of the international school sector and their generation of profit. Generally,

All schools should operate within their financial means to be sustainable as institutions. However, schools can be operated to generate a financial profit either for the benefit of the owners / shareholders directly or to create resources for the development of the school’s work (James & Sheppard, 2014, p. 7).

However, the majority of new international schools around the world are “owned by wealthy, for-profit organisations … (and) like it or not, international education has become a large, lucrative business, robustly immune to the economic crises of the early part of the 21st century” (Walker, 2016, p. 40). Examples of these for-profit organisations are Global Education Management Systems, Nord Anglia Education, and Cognita. For example Global Education Management Systems, situated in Dubai, is considered the largest provider of international schools in the world with a profit revenue estimated to be half a billion US$ per year (Walker, 2016).
2.5 International schools in Kuwait

The history of international schools in Kuwait has not been researched or documented. There is only a list of names of schools issued regularly by the Ministry of Private Education. In 1911, the first Arabic school was established in Kuwait, and the first school to teach English in Kuwait was opened in 1917 (Al-Lugany, 2013) by an American missionary, Reverend Edwin Calverley. He and his wife, Dr Eleanor Calverley, arrived in Kuwait in 1912 and began their missionary career (Allison, 2010). They initially started teaching English and basic mathematics subjects at the missionary school, with the employment of an Iraqi teacher, Gerges Slow. In 1925, they employed another Iraqi teacher, Israel Kaddo, who changed his first name to Ismael. Kaddo established his own private school to teach English in the evening. Figure 2.1 shows Gerges Slow (in the front row wearing glasses) and Ismael Kaddo (in the front row wearing a suit) with their students (Al-Lugany, 2013).
Figure 2.1  First English teachers in Kuwait and their students
In 1936, the Kuwaiti government introduced English language learning in government schools, therefore, Kuwaiti families ceased sending their children to the American missionary school (Al-Othman, 2009).

In 1953, The English School (TES) was the first private school in Kuwait to cater for expatriate students. It was founded by expatriate parents who volunteered to provide schooling for their children. A team of “five parents was formed and it was agreed that the school would be non-profit making” (TES, 2017). The school, which charged fees only to
cover running costs, started with nine students in the first year before expanding to accept 45 students from the ages of four to eight years in 1954. All staff were parents until 1965, when the first qualified teacher joined the school. TES was run as a family business with parents managing all aspects of school life. The school now provides British preparatory school education to over 600 boys and girls aged 2.5 to 13+ (TES, 2017).

Six English schools teaching the British curriculum were established between 1953 and the 1990 Gulf War. Examples of these schools are the English School of Fahaheel in 1968, New English School in 1969, British School of Kuwait in 1978, Kuwait English School in 1979, and Gulf English School in 1980.

Regarding American schools in Kuwait, the first American school was established in 1964. The American School of Kuwait (ASK), initially called the International School of Kuwait, was formed by a board of trustees selected by parents to establish “an international school patterned authentically after the American school model” (ASK, 2017). ASK adopted an education program for kindergarten through to Grade 12 classes to cater for 75 students who enrolled that year. These students were from different nationalities and backgrounds. There were 16 full-time and three part-time teachers when the school was first established in 1964. In 1971, the school was accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (MSA). The number of students enrolled in ASK during the 2016-2017 school year was 2037. The school employed 186 full-time staff during the 2016-2017 school year.

Universal American School, another American school offering an American curriculum to their students, was established before the Gulf War in 1990. It is a non-profit school that opened in 1975 as a “private co-educational, college-preparatory day school serving a multi-national student body of approximately 1800 students from nursery to Grade 12” (Universal American School, 2017). It is accredited by CIS and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC).
As for bilingual international schools, there was only one such school before 1990. Established in 1977, Al-Bayan Bilingual School (BBS) was the first bilingual international school in Kuwait and the Arabian Gulf region. The founder, Fawzia Al-Sultan, with the support of 14 other Kuwaiti women, believed in and “valued the fundamental ingredients of a quality education but at the same time believed in the importance of an Arab heritage with strong cultural values” (BBS, 2017). BBS was accredited by CIS and NEASC in 1989. Currently, there are 2,403 students enrolled in BBS (2017-2018). BBS is a non-profit school with all its revenues allocated towards funding staff salaries and developing school facilities and programs (BBS, 2017). It was responsible for paving the way for future bilingual schools in Kuwait as many families supported the idea of international education combining with the preservation of the local culture and identity.

According to MOE lists of international schools (2014) and international school websites, from 1954 until the beginning of the 1990s, many international schools (either American or British) were established, albeit at a slow pace. After the Gulf War in 1990 when Kuwait was freed from Iraqi occupation, the growth of international schools, especially bilingual international schools, was significant and at a fast rate. The number of international schools in Kuwait increased from nine schools (two American schools, six British schools and one bilingual school) before the Gulf War to 62 schools in 2014 (10 American schools, 18 British schools, 34 bilingual schools), according to the MOE. In addition, there are 44 schools (including Indian, Pakistani, Philippine and others) that use the English language as the medium of instruction in some or most of their curriculum subjects. With few exceptions, my field knowledge and professional network indicate that the vast majority of students in most international schools in Kuwait, especially bilingual schools, are local people (Kuwaitis).

2.6 Curriculum and education system

The significant growth of international schools, globally and locally, and their diversity resulted in many educational companies developing and marketing curriculum programs for use in these schools. Most of these companies are of Western origin and they generally
design the curriculum according to Western priorities, not those of the school’s host country. Curriculum can be a deciding factor for parents when choosing a school (Hayden, 2011). “In research undertaken by MacKenzie, Hayden and Thomson (2003) … the IB Diploma emerged as a strong reason for parental choice” (Hayden, 2011, p. 217). Parents believe that curriculum programs such as the IB Diploma is “a kind of guarantee or certification of the quality of the educational experience” (Lowe, 2000 cited in Hayden, 2011, p. 217).

2.6.1 Pragmatics and ideology of international schools

Most international schools established “in response to … demands of … globally-mobile expatriate families and upwardly-mobile host national families” (Hayden & Thomson, 2008) have a similar purpose, that is, to educate students who are living away from their home countries for many years due to the mobility of their parents’ careers. The ‘pragmatic focus’ of international schools is to offer support for globally mobile students from different countries and cultures. The multicultural nature of the student population is used by these international schools to announce a form of ‘ideological vision’: “Promoting international understanding and encouraging their students to become what might be described as global citizens” (Hayden & Thompson, 2016, p. 10). These two stimuli, pragmatic and ideological, are often intertwined and have been playing major roles in the development of international education and international schools (Tate, 2016). This was present when the first international school, International School of Geneva, was set up to provide a bilingual education and to create the context of a harmonious environment for children of officials of the League of Nations (Tate, 2016). Many aims stem from these pragmatic and ideological visions and they have been pronounced consistently since the beginning of international schooling and their supporting bodies, such as the IB and International Schools Association. “‘International understanding’, ‘international mindedness’, ‘international awareness’, ‘respect for difference’, ‘tolerance’, ‘equality’, ‘education for peace’, ‘global engagement’, the ‘grand mission [of] … shaping world citizens’” (Tate, 2016, p. 22) are qualities that international education promotes in students, and these qualities characterise the world order that students are taught to understand and
live in. Key characteristics of the ideological vision that underpins international education include individualism, freedom, democracy, egalitarianism, rationalism, optimism and universalism (Tate, 2016). These features are not required to be taught explicitly, but indeed, they are present in mission statements of the majority of international schools, international education teaching conceptual statements, international school management documents, teaching and learning methods and content (Tate, 2016).

However, ideological qualities and features of international education are designed and formulated by Westerners who believe these educational principles and values to be universal, some of which are not popular with other regimes and countries of different ideologies and political systems, such as China and Russia, or “many Muslim-majority states which reject the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights in favour of Sharia law” (Tate, 2016, p. 24). It is important to put these principles and values into debate to reach an agreed common ground around ‘universal’ ideological education qualities and principles and not only ‘Western-centric’ beliefs. In this way, the relationship of international education and ‘enlightenment cosmopolitanism’ with the nation state is vitalised, allowing an opportunity for it to be given appropriate consideration (Tate, 2016).

It is arguable, therefore, that the ‘internationalisation’ of curricula is necessary for international schools to attain principles and values of international education in a regional context. It is essential to encourage students to, not only look at their own country, religion and culture, but also to “look at the world beyond their country, religion and culture” (Tate, 2016, p. 28). Developing international curricula, or ‘internationally minded’ curricula, is possible for international schools, as in the case of Kuwaiti international schools, through the support of international education providers, such as the CIS, IB and other international school associations (Tate, 2016).

Some of the most popular international curricula are the IB programs, International Primary Curriculum and Cambridge International Examination Curriculum. According to 2012 ISC Research data on international schools that used such curricula, IB programs were used by 45% of the listed schools, 22% of the schools used other non-IB programs, and 25% of the
schools offered a national curriculum that does not hold international education values. ISC Research data in 2013 revealed these changes: (i) 23% of schools followed one of the IB programs; (ii) 22% of schools followed other international curriculum programs; and (iii) 55% of schools used non-international curriculum programs (Walker, 2016). The situation in Kuwait is similar, as found in the three schools in this study. None had proper international curricula before they applied and attained accreditation. They developed their international curricula with the support of a CIS accreditation agency.

The issue of adopting international education programs by international schools is not an easy process or choice, especially in a non-Western context. Most international schools adopt international curricula designed by Western education organisations and associations, such as the IB and Cambridge International Examinations. These programs were generally designed to meet the needs of Western students and culture. Tate (2016) defended this by arguing “the international education sector has a long experience of educating young people in places where there may be a discrepancy between the ideology of the school and parts of its surrounding environment” (Tate, 2016, p. 34). This situation, according to Tate (2016), should be negotiated between the schools and providers to make compromises with stakeholders in a way to preserve the integrity of the educational program. He argued that it would be most efficient for international schools to tackle their own situation and review their own educational needs, borrowing whatever they find necessary from other international education programs, as part of developing their own curricula, specifically designed for their contexts (Tate, 2016). In doing so, there should be a balance in the “educational programme between the local, national and international (concepts)” (Tate, 2016, p. 28). Stobie (2016, p. 66) offered a similar analysis of the form that international curriculum should take in international schools:

A number of principles and approaches that might be helpful in building a curriculum that respects both local and global realities in such contexts … Schools need to be open to change and swift to adapt. Curriculum needs to recognise children’s interests and reflect the changing nature of society through creating new knowledge and preparing students for life in the modern world … curriculum needs to be a local construct, created, understood and owned by every community and school. The world, as well as individual
students, will be greatly diminished if there is a convergence towards a homogenous and standardised international outcome. (p. 66)

One model of curriculum does not fit all international schools, especially if situated in different contexts and cultures (Walker, 2016). That is why it is important to decide in a local context what is to be included in the curriculum to fulfil the needs of students and stakeholders. In doing so, the curriculum will become balanced and coherent because it is decided locally by stakeholders responsible for its implementation. Nevertheless, one major element of international curricula is the development of international understanding. Promoting global understanding and international mindedness should be a main concern for international schools as it “is the key concept associated with an international education … it can be said that the product of a successful international education is international mindedness” (Hill, 2012, p. 246). This can be enhanced by students’ personal interactions when planning activities, working on projects, arguing and debating academic issues, constructing different tasks, and living together. However, not all international schools, specifically those recently established in Kuwait, have a mix of students from different backgrounds that enable them to set up such interaction. These schools lack the multicultural group of students, making it difficult to create such an interaction between them. Alternatively, according to Walker (2016), such schools have to develop curriculum programs that focus on vicarious experiences that can be delivered through “world literature, world history and geography, and the narrative arts” (p. 48). Walker (2016) argued that an important activity encouraging global understanding is student participation in the Model United Nations (MUN) debating and discussion conferences, which are organised internationally to discuss issues of concern for students throughout the world.

An important element of international curricula and international education is to recognise the significance of a ‘comprehensive language policy’ or ‘multilingualism’ (Walker, 2016), which involves recognising the value of knowing and using more than one language in communication, participating actively both locally and internationally, and increasing critically the capacity to learn. Languages may include the language of instruction in international schools (mostly English in the new category of international schools), a
second language in certain contexts, students’ mother tongue, and language spoken locally where the international school is located (Walker, 2016).

Pragmatically and historically, international education and international schools have always been associated with teaching and learning more than one language. Although most traditional (early) international schools had English language as the medium of instruction, there were opportunities and incentive to learn a second or third language because normally they were situated in countries with different language(s) to that of the students’ home country. Ideologically, acquiring more than one language has always been considered essential for international education as it aids students intellectually, culturally and socially to “become interculturally aware ‘from the inside’ through using the distinctive expressions, tone, concepts and world picture of the language they are learning” (Tate, 2016, p. 30). Recently, an awareness of multilingualism has been enhanced by calling for, not only acquiring a second language for everyday fluency, but for a second language to be used actively in a significant part of the curriculum in a variety of subjects, rather than taught as a foreign language in a separate class (Baker, 2011).

International mindedness, intercultural understanding, global engagement and multilingualism are important components in any international curriculum. These components, according to Walker (2016), are a necessary part of a school’s curriculum in order to qualify as an international institution. If such curriculum is adopted by a school, it is not required to be authorised by an international education organisation such as IB, or accredited by an international accreditation agency such as CIS, in order to be recognised as an ‘international school.’ Despite this, IB and CIS, and other accredited organisations, have significant roles in facilitating international education in international schools and assuring the quality of this education.

2.6.2 Pedagogy

In international education and schools, independent and student-centred learning, self-enquiry, a discussion approach to learning, collaboration activities, debating skills and freedom of choice characterise pedagogy in theory and practice. This is because
international education does not only challenge traditional national education content and process but also pedagogies that are normally embedded in traditional approaches to education, as in the case of Kuwait where a teacher-centred approach and memorisation have long governed approaches to teaching and learning. Tate (2016) argued that “the ideological objectives of international education fit more easily with a pedagogy that encourages discussion, debate, collaboration and enquiry than one that didactic and relies more heavily on memorisation and the reproduction of what has been memorised” (Tate, 2016, p. 31). The connection between international education and progressive pedagogies is not automatic. However, international education has adopted progressive pedagogies as a result of their wide acceptance, based on research and experience in most of the Western world (Tate, 2016).

In relation to international education pedagogy, Stobie (2016) proposed that child-centred and knowledge-centred approaches provide essential perspectives in international curriculum and not alternatives to one another. In other words, the international school’s responsibility is based on two major elements: (i) preparing students to enter higher education; and (ii) ensuring they are capable of succeeding once they are there. They require students, through access to new tools facilitated by schools, to develop critical thinking about the world they will encounter in the future (Stobie, 2016).

One vital element regarding the pedagogy in international schools is the importance of engaging the learner’s understanding in different contexts and cultures, such as the Kuwaiti culture, to have active learning needs. Active learning is at the core of theories of constructivism, which describe “how learning happens, provides insights into the human condition that have important implications for teaching and learning for all, provided cultural and context are respected” (Stobie, 2016, p. 67). The principles of this theory are related to international education since it is taught in different contexts and cultures. So, whenever teaching and learning approaches are used, there should be an appropriate balance between these approaches to suit the national culture and local context. In the context of international schools of Kuwait, the balance of teaching and learning approaches may differ according to each school’s character and type. American and British schools that
have a big population of non-Kuwaiti students, and which were established by expatriate parents and managed by Western staff, follow Western teaching and learning approaches. Other international, including bilingual, schools that were established by Kuwaiti individuals and investors, supporting Kuwaiti students as the majority of their student population, vary in their teaching and learning approaches, depending on their teachers, staff, and management. Many of these schools, as will be explained in this study, experience difficulty in balancing Western and traditional Kuwaiti approaches due to a lack of staff who are able to adapt international educational teaching and learning approaches to their context and culture.

2.6.3 Professional development of teachers

The PD of teachers and staff is mentioned in this section because it is connected to the balance of teaching and learning approaches that are used in international schools. Attention should be focused on training teachers and staff, especially when they are of Western origin and are not familiar with the local culture and educational context, as in the case of Kuwait. Professional development programs should be designed locally so that they are contextually and culturally sensitive, and developed to meet the expectations of local stakeholders of international schools in Kuwait, in a way to find the right balance between local practices and Western teaching and learning approaches. Stobie (2016, p. 68) argued that “important universal themes exist, including active learning, making learning and thinking visible, deliberative practice and the importance of developing metacognitive competence. Precisely how these are approached needs to take account of local cultural factors and practical realities.”

2.6.4 Assessment

Assessment occupies an important place in the international curriculum as it plays an integral part in the evaluation of teaching and learning processes. Thereby, it has a major role in determining the effectiveness of the international education system in international schools. Assessment techniques should match the teaching and learning approaches described earlier in Section 2.6.2. Accordingly, Stobie (2016) argued that assessment
practices should concentrate on “higher-order thinking skills, problem-solving, applications of knowledge, interpretation and evaluation” (Stobie, 2016, p. 64). These types of assessment tasks are necessary because they influence the choices of teaching and learning approaches that support the improvement of ‘deep disciplinary understanding’. Generally, for the 21st century, the drive of assessment tasks emphasises collaboration, group-work, team effort skills and associated competencies (Stobie, 2016).

2.6.5 Coherent instructional system

In order to achieve effective educational systems and schools, there must be a coherent instructional system that is in harmony with the local context and national culture. In a coherent instructional system, the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment are connected systematically and are supportive in implementing pre-planned education objectives and achieving program goals. A coherent curriculum of an international school is designed to provide international education to students from different backgrounds and cultures so they can gain the skills to function effectively on an international basis. With that, teaching and learning approaches play a major supportive role in delivering the curriculum successfully. Assessment tasks evaluate the effectiveness of the pedagogy and indicate whether changes in professional training should be introduced to improve teachers’ capabilities and teaching skills to attain required learning outcomes and achieve curriculum standards. In addition to school assessment tasks, assessment includes national and international examinations that have the responsibility to recognise the students’ skills and assess them in order to design the appropriate form of curriculum to be used to improve them. “They also have a responsibility to ensure that approaches to assessment, including coursework expectations, respect cultural norms. Technology, through more sophisticated computer-based assessment, provides some promise of new possibilities in this area” (Stobie, 2016, p. 68).

2.7 Educational policy

It is important to clarify and understand the role of an educational policy and its effect on teaching and learning. To understand the educational policy, a definition of ‘policy’ should be explained before researching this area. Initially, policy means “an explicit or implicit
single decision or group of decisions which may set out directives for guiding future decisions, initiate or retard action, or guide implementation of previous decisions” (Haddad, 1995, p. 18). It “is decisively shaped by powerful structural forces of an economic, ideological and cultural nature” (Bell & Stevenson, 2006, p. 9). On the other hand, “policy can … be seen as not only the statements of strategic, organisational and operational values (product) but also the capacity to operationalise values (process)” (Bell & Stevenson, 2006, p. 18).

Educational policy can generally be understood as the decisions taken by policymakers or designers to implement and achieve certain educational aims and goals within a certain timeline. However, it is “complex relationships between ideas, the dissemination of ideas and the contextualisation … of ideas” (Ball, 1998, p. 127). It is “grafted onto and realised within very different national and cultural contexts and (is) affected, inflected and deflected by them” (Ball, 1998, p. 127). To understand it fully, “it is necessary to clarify three forms of educational policy … rhetorical policy, enacted policy, and implemented policy” (Espinoza, 2010, p. 99). Rhetorical policy refers to the promised educational goals of senior politicians that are given during their speeches to the nation, whereas the enacted policies are decrees or laws issued by an authority to set certain directions and guidance of certain educational objectives. However, implemented policies are the achievement of enacted policies, whether modified or changed, in clear systematic procedures (Espinoza, 2010). In a similar way of understanding, Moutsios (2010, p. 124) stated that “educational policy-making should be considered a hierarchical, expert-granted or implicit political opinion about the purpose, the content and the pedagogic mode of learning”.

National educational policies are designed to reflect the needs of the citizens, especially those in power. A policy reflects the society but also aims to develop it for particular purposes. National policymaking is a construction of many processes and ideas, as explained in detail by Ball (1998, p. 126):

National policy making is inevitably a process of bricolage: a matter of borrowing and copying bits and pieces of ideas from elsewhere, drawing upon and amending locally tried and tested approaches, cannibalising theories,
research, trends and fashions and not infrequently flailing around for anything at all that looks as though it might work. Most policies are ramshackle, compromise, hit-and-miss affairs, that are reworked, tinkered with, nuanced and inflected through complex processes of influence, text production, dissemination and, ultimately, re-creation in contexts of practice.

2.7.1 Globalisation effect on educational policy

As a result of globalisation, educational policymaking is influenced by international organisations (IOs) (Al’Abri, 2011). Jones and Coleman agreed that “no education system … can survive and stay unaffected by globalisation” (Al’Abri, 2011, p. 491). In the context of globalisation, education is considered an international commodity (Al’Abri, 2011), which has great value in the international economy. Thus, educational policies are no longer a national affair and are closed to local authorities and organisations, but international organisations have a strong influence in designing and approving these policies to serve local and international needs. This can be justified from a nation’s point of view, as it enables a nation to be economically competitive with other nations (Al’Abri, 2011). “Rizvi and Lingard (2010) confirmed that globalisation has reformed and redesigned the educational policy terrain … and the process of globalisation has deeply shifted and changed the ways in which educational policies are developed, implemented and evaluated” (Al’Abri, 2011, p. 493).

2.7.2 Global education organisations

International organisations that affect global educational policies include UNESCO, OECD, World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Trade Organization (WTO). Organisations such as UNESCO and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) are involved directly, by designing educational policies and educational programs or indirectly, by supporting certain educational policies and programs or training, by providing financial loans to nations. This is the role of the World Bank, IMF and WTO. Moutsios (2009, p. 128) summarised the roles of some of these transnational institutions:
(They) play, no doubt, a crucial role … (in turning) national states and societies into instruments of capital flows and production-consumption cycles. Indeed, transnational institutions call on educational systems … to present high scores in production-related subjects and skills (OECD), to focus on human capital production (World Bank) or to become ‘educational services’ opened up to foreign investments (WTO).

The aims or agendas of transnational organisations are to encourage quality learning and teaching, and gaining good skills, as well as to increase competitiveness amongst nation states. These agendas are the direct result of economic neoliberalism since the 1980s (Moutsios, 2009). George (1999) confirmed that “(t)he social and economic reform process of neoliberalism is based on global competition between nations and regions” (Vongalis-Macrow, 2004, p. 490). In reality, neoliberalism and globalisation move in the same direction whereby they “have renewed and accelerated the capitalist conception of modernisation in emerging nations of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean” (Shizha & Kariwo, 2011, p. 43). Capitalist conception and principles have been affecting “government policies for education and training … since the 1980s … to establish the new moral order of schools and schooling, and to produce the new student/subject who is appropriate to (and appropriated by) the neoliberal economy” (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 247).

2.7.3 Kuwaiti education policies

In Kuwait, education policies were created by the MOE Decree of 1979 with the cooperation of international organisations, such as UNESCO (joined in 1960). Through its permanent delegation, the Kuwait government provides regular general reports about the education process in the state. This report includes principles and objectives of education, laws and other basic regulations of education, education administration and management, and education structure and management (UNESCO-IBE, 2011). It also explains the long-term goals and strategies, such as one mentioned in the 2010/2011 report about the Education Strategy 2005/2025. In spite of the “Decision of the Minister of Education No. 10664 of 1967 (which) stipulates that private educational establishments are subject to supervision by the Ministry of Education” (UNESCO-IBE, 2011), there is no
differentiation (in this report) between private Arabic schools and international schools. The emergent question here is: Are specific decrees (or laws) and education policies created to supervise these schools and ensure their appropriateness to the nation’s general educational needs?

2.8 International accreditation of international schools

One distinctive element of international schools is the “absence of any central international regulating body that can determine whether a school may be defined as such” (Hayden, 2011, p. 217). Although many such organisations exist, such as International Baccalaureate Organization, International Studies Association, European Council of International Schools (ECIS) and the Yew Chung Network, Bunnell (2008) argued that the industry still needs them to form an allience to bring order and a clear worldwide structure to produce an effective and meaningful product. He suggested that these accrediting bodies need to play an active role in legitimizing international schools (Bunnell, 2016). Legitimizing (or accrediting) international schools by accrediting organisations, according to Bunnell (2016), is considered very important for a number of reasons,

Parents need to know exactly what they are purchasing for their children’s education. The students need to prove to other authorities (e.g. universities, and employers) that they have attended a legitimate institution. Educators, many of who now see international schooling as a distinct career-path, need to know what sort of institution they are choosing to work in, and what to expect when they get there. (p. 19)

2.8.1 International accreditation organisations

The CIS, MSA and NEASC are the three most sought after accrediting agencies in Kuwait. The accreditation process across these associations is similar, which is “predicated upon a mixture of internal school self-review and an external element consisting of review by professional peers” (Fertig, 2007, p. 336 as cited in James & Sheppard, 2014, p. 6). The initial step involves submitting general information about the school and if satisfactory, the school is visited by accrediting agents who explain the accreditation process thoroughly and identify areas of need. The school usually has two to five years to complete a self-
evaluation phase and submit a detailed report. All three associations identify this as the most important stage of the accreditation process. A second visit focuses on two main areas: (i) an external evaluation where the school is assessed according to external standards set by the accrediting agency; and (ii) an assessment of the internal evaluation carried out by the school. A major focus of the internal evaluation is to determine whether the school’s mission statement and aims match the practice and demographics of the school (CIS, MSA & NEASC).

2.8.2 International accreditation in Kuwait

With the increasing mobility of educational qualifications, demand for international accreditation is on the rise worldwide (MacDonald, 2006), especially in the Gulf region (Fertig, 2007a). Although international accreditation is a voluntary process, the associated prestige has created expectations by stakeholders that schools acquire it in order to obtain legitimacy, “especially where the schools are not required to adhere to any national standards. It also confirms that the school is a legitimate site for students to progress to other higher institutions” (James & Sheppard, 2014, p. 6). In essence, the idea of accreditation is positive, however, the increasing demand creates the risk of it becoming a commodity as opposed to a process of educational development and improvement. In Dubai, international accreditation is now compulsory for all international schools (Najami, 2008), and it is now compulsory in Kuwait to be accredited by an international accreditation agency. Furthermore, accredited schools have a better reputation, which means increased enrolments, and in many cases, higher school fees. “Being accredited thus enables international schools to attract students from expatriate families and, in many settings, local host country families” (James & Sheppard, 2014, p. 6). There are few non-profit private schools in Kuwait because most are owned by large companies (not always educational) that are profit oriented. In Kuwait, accreditation could work as a positive force to keep profitable educational institutes in check. However, due to these agencies being the only institutes monitoring the ‘quality’ of education offered in private schools (Kuwait Pocket Guide.com, 2015) and very little research exists on the effectiveness of international
accrediting agencies in foreign contexts (Fertig, 2007), it brings into question whether sole reliance on these agencies is a satisfactory monitor of quality education.

2.8.3 International accreditation efficiency

Questions need to be asked about the effectiveness of accrediting agencies in assessing schools in the Gulf and whether they are compromised by financial gains of international schools. All three of the above-mentioned accrediting agencies stated that the self-evaluation process is the most important stage of accreditation because it is where the school can formulate significant developments. However, “self-evaluation cannot take place under heavy pressure from outside the school” (Vanhoof & Petegem, 2007, p. 269) as results gained under such circumstances “might be very far removed from the actual functioning of the school and also prove unusable both for accountability as well as school improvement purposes” (Davis & Rudd, 2001 cited in Vanhoof & Petegem, 2007, p. 269). Therefore, under circumstances where board members are more focused on financial gain, it is possible that the all-important self-evaluation stage fails to represent the true condition of a school. Based on seven sections evaluated through the CIS accreditation process, Fertig (2007, p. 340) expounds, “It is possible … to attempt to build up a picture of the kind of school operation that would successfully pass through this process.” Fertig (2007, p. 337) further states:

There is a sense in which this self-examination can be viewed as a neutral and non-threatening process, in which collegial members of the school community undertake careful reflection on their actions. It is interesting, then, that the CIS (2003:7) guidelines specifically warn that the self-study ‘should not represent the views of any minority group within the school’.

Most Gulf countries offer scholarships for their nationals to study undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in Western countries. A common complaint I have heard from students during and after their studies in Western institutes is that they struggle with the academic demands, even after attending accredited international schools in the Gulf. Although all Gulf countries have standardised exams for both public and private Arabic schools, this is not the case for international schools. The problem this creates is obvious:
How can international bodies determine if one school offers quality education in comparison to other schools in that region? For example, in Australia, the IB program is offered in a growing number of schools, however, the grades achieved from completing the IB program are matched against the national Australian Tertiary Admission Rank for entrance into undergraduate programs in Australia (Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre). Such a system allows the government to standardise education for its citizens. Although most international schools offer Standard Admission Tests (SATs) in Kuwait, students are not required to take them unless attending an American university. Even so, SATs do not compensate for disparities in the current system. The establishment of national and perhaps eventually Gulf Cooperation Council examinations could help solve problems of standardisation and quality assurance (Barber, Mourshed, & Whelan, 2007), however, before such systems can be put into place, wider quality control systems would need to be initiated.

According to Hendriks, Doolaard and Bosker (2002) (cited in Vanhoof & Petegem, 2007, p. 262), “Quality of education is something on which the government, the school board, school management, teaching staff, pupils, parents, the business world and higher education must agree by means of dialogue.” Quite often in the Gulf, however, these glamorous newly-founded Western institutes are financed by one or two owners and therefore, lack collaborative and long-term planning required to cultivate quality education.

2.8.4 International values in accreditation

International accreditation translates into the implementation of international values, but: What happens when the society seeking accreditation does not sit neatly within the international values framework? Does the accreditation process accommodate different value systems? Fertig (2007, p. 341) noted that in relation to accreditation, “consideration needs to be given to the possibility that different national groups have different value systems relating to areas of human behaviour”, further highlighting it in the CIS standards (2007, p. 342):
There is indeed some recognition … that schools need to show an awareness of local requirements in areas such as employment law and financial regulation … (however) … the central thrust of the standards for accreditation points to the view that these benchmarks are applicable to international schools irrespective of location or the national context in which they exist.

In Kuwait, long-standing schools with a history of accreditation are known for their liberal opposition to traditional Arab and Islamic values, such as the American School of Kuwait, American International School and Universal American School. This raises the question: To what extent do the values of international schools and accreditation impact the local culture? Thomas (2010, p. 16) explained that “the impact of globalisation/internationalism … is a process of social transformation in which global and local forces interact to shape cultural and economic activities”. He later referred to this as an assimilation of values, but because this phenomenon has not been researched comprehensively, it is difficult to predict the long-term impact international accrediting agencies have on the local culture (Fertig, 2007).

2.8.5 International school policies in Kuwait

Education reforms, especially in the international school sector, are minimal or non-existent in Kuwait and other Gulf countries. Although, “international schools typically have a high degree of autonomy in relation to national regulation” (James & Sheppard, 2014, p. 5), the only role played by the government (in Kuwait) in monitoring international schools is in approving staff qualifications, standardising school facilities and monitoring the censorship of educational texts (Kuwait Pocket Guide.com, 2015). The responsibility for assessing the effectiveness of overall school performance is given to the school itself and/or international accrediting agencies.

Surprisingly, very little research has “focused specifically upon international school accreditation” and its effectiveness in monitoring and developing the quality of teaching and learning (Fertig, 2009). Therefore, one of the major investigations of this study examines the role of international accreditation organisations in accrediting international schools in Kuwait. In relation to accreditation and legitimizing of these schools in this
study, the issue of the way of governing these schools will be researched and some insights will be analysed. James & Sheppard (2014) found that,

There is a good case for arguing that if the accreditation process is to ensure that a school is a legitimate organisation for the education of young people, then it should be centrally concerned with the school’s governance arrangements … (and) accreditation should require that any change in the governance arrangements, such as a change of ownership, financial purpose or constitution of the governing body, should be a matter of interest for accrediting bodies. (p. 18)

This part of the study is built on the understanding that relying solely on international bodies to monitor quality assurance in international schools is not a strategy with long-term sustainability. I agree with researchers recommending that reform in the Gulf must come from within (Norton & Syed, 2003). Less reliance on outside agents is necessary for the creation of an independent and contextually compatible education system. At the heart of such a system is the establishment of quality assurance monitoring systems.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter offers a relevant literature review regarding the main components and core areas of the research in this study. It focuses on these areas in order to understand the connection between them and to justify their links to the research questions. For instance, the forces of globalisation on the international education and international schools are described showing how this increased the popularity of these schools. Then it explains the role of English as a global language and its role in affecting the growth of international schools globally. The international school sector is discussed in detail, showing how it started and grew from 1924 to 2015. Its history was essential to this research in order to reveal the factors that affected these schools and to compare them to the history of international schools in Kuwait, which was similar in many ways and interesting to research. There was no similar research regarding the history of international schools in Kuwait, or any study investigating their role in the education system in Kuwait. Therefore, a lot of time and personal effort was required to uncover the history and other relevant
information about international schools in Kuwait. Discovering that the English language and basic maths skills learning occurred in Kuwait in 1917 by an American missionary was remarkable.

The curriculum and education system of international schools is a major section of this literature review because it covers the core constituents of international education and international schools. The first element was the pragmatics and ideology of traditional international schools and how it is different in some of the new international schools. The pragmatics or the purpose of establishing international schools revolves around a variety of reasons depending on timing (early traditional schools or new international schools), context (Western or non-Western) and stakeholders. For the ideology of international schools, visions of ‘intercultural understanding’, ‘international mindedness’, ‘global citizen’ and other similar visions are promoted by these schools. Pedagogy of international schools is also discussed, revealing that a learner-centred approach, independent learning, discussion, and other forms of progressive pedagogy are encouraged by international education and the international school system because these approaches enable students to survive in any context and to succeed in any higher education institution worldwide. Assessment is also discussed in the literature review due to its importance in evaluating students and education system efficiency of international schools. The literature reveals that forms of problem solving, application of knowledge and other similar assessment tasks are the preferred way of assessing in international education. Nevertheless, the assessment results should be the criteria to judge the teaching and learning techniques and when adjusted accordingly, proper PD programs for staff can be provided if the aim is to reach a coherent instructional education system at these schools.

The focus of the next section (Chapter Three) is on the educational policy globally and locally since the international schools in this country are obliged to respect these policies and commit to its regulations. Globalisation and global education organisations, such as UNESCO, have a clear connection to the MOE in Kuwait and regular reports are submitted as a form of cooperation and collaboration. However, educational policies regarding international schools were not clearly explained, and there were no specific regulations or
policies mentioned in these reports, but they are dealt with this sector as a part of private schools, which include private Arabic schools.

The last section of this literature review relate to international accreditation of international schools. It is essential to discuss this matter because international accreditation is compulsory in Kuwait. Accreditation qualifies schools for the title of ‘international school’, promoting their status, and consequently attracting more students. Generally, most accreditation organisations, such as the CIS and MSA, have similar procedures in accrediting schools and it takes approximately five years to complete this process. It is a detailed process and covers all areas of the school. However, since the accreditation process depends on a self-evaluation procedure, and since most of the new international schools, especially in Kuwait, are for-profit schools, it may not be fully effective in this situation and could lack in some areas, as discussed in Chapter Eight).
Chapter Three: Theoretical Frameworks

3.1 Introduction

Chapter Three describes three theoretical and conceptual frameworks: (i) cosmopolitanism; (ii) neoliberalism; and (ii) education quality assurance that are used to analyse data and interpret the findings of this study. Through these frameworks, the quality of education in international schools in Kuwait is explored, described and interpreted. Using a theoretical framework in research is important because it guides the researcher through almost all aspects of the study and affects his approach to the study. “Frameworks have been described as the map for a study” (Fulton & Krainovich-Miller, 2010, as cited in Green, 2014, p. 35).

These frameworks were chosen to explore and understand the situation of education quality in international schools in Kuwait, as explained below, because they are interrelated in more than one area of the research, and they construct a clear link to the main themes of the study. For example, neoliberalism explains the establishment of international schools in relation to a ‘market’ basis; it looks at the role of the state in facilitating the establishment of international schools; and the role of international accreditation and the privatisation of education in international schools. Cosmopolitanism is used to explain the role of international accreditation (CIS in this study) in facilitating intercultural understanding and the pragmatic ‘globalist’ current of international education, which “may be identified with the processes of economic and cultural globalisation” (Cambridge & Thompson, 2004, p. 164). It also provides a perspective on parents’ views of international education in these schools regarding their investment in their children’s future. The education quality assurance conceptual framework (Cheng, 2003) is used to explain the relationship between student academic achievement and staff qualifications and experience in international schools in Kuwait. It aids discussion of the effect of parents’ expectations and satisfaction, national educational policies, accreditation measures, and parental involvement in the quality of education in international bilingual schools. It also aids in the study of key characteristics of learning and teaching methods and the role of Arabic and international
curriculums in contributing to the quality of education in international bilingual schools in this study. Table 3.1 and Figure 3.1 provide a summary of theoretical frameworks used in this study.

Table 3.1 Theoretical and conceptual frameworks

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Figure 3.1  Theoretical framework used in this study
3.2 Cosmopolitanism

“One of the most significant developments in the present time is the enhanced momentum of globalisation” (Delanty, 2009, p. 1). Global forces take different shapes and forms: these include the economic, technological, cultural and political. It is difficult to ignore the major changes in our life as a result of globalisation. “Globalisation has brought about a tremendous transformation of social relations” (Delanty, 2009, p. 1). The influence, whether positive or negative, has become a reality and consequently individuals and societies are required to react to it and adapt. Education has experienced major changes as a result of globalisation: including the “overwhelming interconnectivity of the world” (Delanty, 2009, p. 1). A clear example of globalisation in education is the growth in international schools and school systems (curricula), which “have come to play a central role in the globalised economy” (Hayden, 2011, p. 214). An important point, in regard to international curricula, should be raised here is that “achieving global orientation while ensuring a strong national identity at the same time … (became) a solution” (Doherty, 2009, p. 3) of producing ‘international-mindedness’ that will reach to “better national alignment with, and positioning within, the knowledge economy, and to meet the human capital demands of the globalised markets in 21st century capitalism” (Doherty, 2009, p. 3). The capacity of crossing national borders through international schools and international curricula offers “a competitive edge with which to strategically pursue economic and cultural capital” (Doherty et al, 2009, p. 10).

According to Delanty (2009) “theories of globalisation do not provide an (adequate) interpretation of the social world that extends the methodological horizon of social analysis” (p. 1). To overcome this issue, in this research, cosmopolitan theory is used in this study to analyse parental desires as it “offers a promising way to link the analysis of globalisation to developments in social and political theory” (Delanty, 2009, p. 2). It is also used to explain the reaction of many parties involved in this process, but most specifically, the choices of parents to put their children in these schools.
Cosmopolitanism is classified, according to Gunesch (2004), as “a phenomenon of globalization” (p. 265). Papastephanou (2002) claims that globalization “signifies an empirical phenomenon whereas (cosmopolitanism) … denotes an ideal” (p. 75). However, Mingnolo (2002) assumed that “globalisation is a set of designs to manage the world whereas cosmopolitanism is a set of projects towards planetary conviviality” (p. 721). It is important to mention that the concept of globalisation and its forms originated and debated in the 1940s, but, interestingly, the concept of cosmopolitanism and its forms go back to the 1st and 2nd centuries; the original Greek Stoics’ concept of cosmopolitan as ‘world citizen’ (Gunesch, 2004).

On the other hand, in relation to cultural terms, Hannerz (1990) describes that cosmopolitan entails “relationships to a plurality of cultures … and includes a stance toward diversity itself, toward the coexistence of cultures in the individual experience … a willingness to engage with the other” (p. 239). He specifies that cosmopolitanism involve a personal ability and competence to “make one’s way into other cultures, through listening, looking, intuiting, and reflecting” (Hannerz, 1990, p. 239).

In relation to international education, cosmopolitanism could constitute, by containing and “furthering the notion of internationalism, … (a) complement for ‘international education’ in theory or practice, … The explicit reference of cosmopolitanism to the development of the individual, in contrast to institutionalized frameworks, opens up further usefulness for international education” (Gunesch, 2004, p. 251). Development of a cosmopolitan person’s characteristics would aid in accommodating multiple agendas that suit varieties of clients, including locals, found in varieties of international schools (Gunesch, 2004).

The focus of analysis in this study regarding cosmopolitanism is based on two inter-related ideas derived from Weenink’s concept of cosmopolitan capital: “The idea of an awareness of global connectedness and … the idea of an orientation of open-mindedness towards the Other” (Weenink, 2008, p. 1089). Weenink (2008) suggested that the former idea of cosmopolitanism – global connectedness – defines the priorities of pragmatic cosmopolitans while the latter – an orientation of open-mindedness towards the Other –
defines the priorities of those he describes as dedicated cosmopolitans. Open-mindedness or International Mindedness is “an overarching construct related to multilingualism, intercultural understanding and global engagement” (Hill, 2012 as cited in Hacking et al., 2018, p. 3). However, the IB explains and defines International Mindedness as “an attitude of openness to, and curiosity about, the world and different cultures. It is concerned with developing a deep understanding of the complexity, diversity and motives that underpin human actions and interactions” (IB, 2009: 4 as cited in Hacking et al., 2018, p. 5). In Weenink’s (2008) research into parents’ choices of international education in the Netherlands, he differentiated between these two forms of cosmopolitans by asserting that dedicated cosmopolitan parents “taught their children to explore the world and to take a global perspective in their course of life, while … pragmatic cosmopolitans thought that globalising processes required cosmopolitan competencies” (Weenink, 2008, p. 1089). Despite the similarity of this study to Weenink’s (2008) research in relation to the choices of parents of children attending international schools, there is a significant difference regarding the social group, “the rules of the appropriate forms of cosmopolitan behaviour” (Weenink, 2008, p. 1104). As discussed in Chapter Eight, the parents’ data being gathered in Kuwait provide a different form of pragmatic cosmopolitan to what Weenink (2008) found in his study due to the different “social arena in which it is activated” (Weenink, 2008, p. 1103). Thus, there was “an eye for both the … cleavages and social ties that the cosmopolitan condition … bring” (Weenink, 2008, p. 1104) in the analysis of parents’ responses.

3.2.1 Cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitanisation

It is necessary here to discuss in more depth the concepts of cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitanisation. This can be done through references to explanations provided by Beck and Sznaider (2006). They argued that cosmopolitanism is the “consciously constructed, normative, moral and political ideal of world citizenship … (while cosmopolitanisation) comprises a relatively autonomous social force, which emerges from global interdependencies in which millions of people are linked by worldwide risks of production and consumption” (Weenink, 2008, p. 1091). In the case of this study, international schools
are considered (or can be seen to be) a necessary place where world citizens are educated and prepared to compete for better jobs or situations, and also as a place where students are taught to be open to other cultures and world citizens.

3.2.2 Cosmopolitan capital

“Cosmopolitan is also a source of power and can be understood as a form of social and cultural capital” (Weenink, 2008, p. 1092). Cosmopolitan capital is therefore derived from being part of, and engaged in, “globalising social arenas” (and international schools are examples of this). This places students, teachers, principals and parents associated with international schools in privileged positions where they can meet and feel comfortable and familiar with people who are from the same social class. Employing the principles of cosmopolitan theory in the analysis of data will aid in clarifying the answers and perceptions of the participants, especially regarding the parents’ choice of international bilingual schools in this study. The interest in this study is to explain the nature of parents’ desire regarding the development of cosmopolitan dispositions in their children. According to Delanty (2006), cosmopolitan dispositions involve world openness and self-transformation, while Holton (2009) asserted that a cosmopolitan disposition involves global belonging, involvement and responsibility, and is therefore not simply restricted to the immediate locality. In the context of Kuwait, which is culturally different to Western contexts, this understanding of cosmopolitan dispositions may raise interesting questions about the cultural complexity that exists in the current educational environment. To deal with such complexity, another concept of cosmopolitan (Appiah (2007) can be used to explain that partial cosmopolitan is possible in certain contexts where values include both universal and local perspectives. Similarly, Woodward, Skrbis and Bean (2008) argued that there are multiple cosmopolitans, and they are not consistent across all fields. This means that, as explained below, parents wish for their children to achieve international qualifications but at the same time to keep their local values and identity.
3.2.3 Dedicated and pragmatic cosmopolitans

In this study, the ideas of dedicated (or idealistic) and pragmatic cosmopolitans are used to explore the situation of people involved with international bilingual schools. This will be done with schools that focus on developing international-mindedness in the students, those focussing on academic achievement (related to English language acquisition, global cultural capital and Western university admission), and those working to balance both agendas.

Through this theory, the cosmopolitan capital of those parents who are investing in their children can be explained and analysed. By identifying their cosmopolitanism in this research, an understanding about their views and expectations in regard to their evaluation of the education quality in schools in this study can emerge. “It is possible to gain an understanding of how a cosmopolitan disposition is a source of power and a form of social and cultural capital that parents may be seeking when choosing an international school for their children” (Reid & Ibrahim, 2017, p. 268). Students’ lives are not only formed by economic capital, but “by ‘dispositions of the mind and body’ and ‘cultural goods’ institutionalised in the form of educational qualifications (cultural capital). Exchange of capital is in turn structured by social obligations, networks, and connections, which are often institutionalised in the form of titles and credentials (social capital)” (Noordegraaf & Schinkel, 2011, p. 104). Therefore, desiring cosmopolitan capital may take many forms as it is “an expression of agency, which is acted out when people are forced to cope with the cosmopolitan condition when it enters their personal lives” (Weenink, 2008, p. 1103).

Another relevant understanding that will be identified using cosmopolitan theory is the accreditation agency’s (in this case CIS) effect on schools in this study and the nature of the evaluation scheme conducted by CIS regarding the quality of their international education systems. In other words: What elements of quality does CIS focus on during the evaluation process and how do they affect the cosmopolitan capital of the students in these schools?
3.3 Neoliberalism

Generally, neoliberalism is understood as “global market-liberalism based on a market-driven approach to economic, social and educational policy” (Cherif, Romanowski, & Nasser, 2012, p. 472). In greater detail, Romanowski (2014) described neoliberalism as an attempt “to develop and make trade between nations easier, freeing the movement of goods, resources and enterprises with the goals of finding cheaper resources and to maximise profits and efficiency” (p. 4). It is a term that covers ‘economic, social and philosophy theory’, which involves removing regulations and encouraging privatisation of different social services (Woo, 2013). The state lessens its power to intervene as neoliberal strategies facilitate the control of production by global organisations far from the local authorities’ management in order to “remove the buffer of social welfare as a governmental function in the belief that the market operates most efficiently and effectively without regulation” (Lakes & Carter, 2011, p. 107). Globally, neoliberalism has an agenda of changing all economies worldwide so they can be managed by international capital (Churches & McBride, 2013). Under neoliberalism, “there is a distinct withdrawal/shrinking of the state and a transfer of competence to the private sector. Areas previously the competence of the state are subsumed under a capitalist mode of production” (Narsiah, 2002, p. 3). It is argued that this withdrawal of the state is due to the high cost of public services, which is a heavy burden on governments around the world, including the First World countries. Therefore, cutting public expenditure was principal among the stated goals of national and global capitalism, and it is argued that neoliberalism has generally succeeded in doing so (Hill & Kumar, 2012). One such expenditure item relates to educational institutions. Sklair (2001) argued that “global capitalism succeeds by turning most spheres of social life into businesses, by making social institutions – such as schools, universities, prisons, hospitals, welfare systems – more business-like” (Cambridge, 2002, p. 230). This was echoed by Lakes and Carter (2011, p. 108).

Apple (2006) and Hursh (2007), among others, claimed that the ultimate goal of neoliberal reformers is to convert educational systems into markets, and as much as possible, privatise educational services. Others noted that this development is already well underway in the
form of publicly-supported vouchers for private school tuition, high-stakes standardised testing, public and private charters, single-sex schooling, scripted curricula, the deskillling of teachers, alternative teacher training, outsourcing of tutoring, the elimination of teachers’ unions, and in general, the underfunding of public education.

Hill and Kumar (2012) expanded on the description of the agenda that global capitalist classes have for education. They stated that it is a business agenda that focuses on producing labour power for capitalist corporations, setting educational profit-making business, and allowing these corporations to make a profit from its activities, whether national or international.

Neoliberalism, as a paradigm, has been dominant in reforming the economic, social and education sectors since the 1970s, when Western industrialised nations suffered an economic downturn (Kubota, 2011). Neoliberalism, as an approach, is aimed at replacing the welfare state, which seeks to ensure equality between the rights of all citizens with a post-welfare state, which refers all sectors and aspects of society to the ‘wisdom’ of the market (Giroux, 2006, as cited in Kubota, 2011; Kubota, 2011). In this way, the economic growth of the state and corporate development are achieved through removing government regulations on the privatisation of social sectors and services, and amendments to employment systems to reduce labour costs (Kubota, 2011).

3.3.1 Neoliberalism and education

The education sector, historically, was developed and supported by the local government of the state or country, but due to globalisation, the impact of neoliberal policies on education have been intensified. The World Bank and IMF have contributed to this (Lakes & Carter, 2011). They are powerful and influential international organisations that provide loans and technical assistance for education and other sectors (Lakes & Carter, 2011).

Generally, international organisations that affect global educational policies include UNESCO, World Bank, OECD, IMF and WTO. UNESCO and OECD are involved directly in the design of educational policies and programs. In contrast, the World Bank,
IMF and WTO indirectly support certain educational policies and programs or training by providing financial loans to nations. Moutsios (2009, p. 128) summarised the roles of some of these transnational institutions:

(They) play, no doubt, a crucial role … (in) turn(ing) national states and societies into instruments of capital flows and production-consumption cycles. Indeed, transnational institutions call on educational systems … to present high scores in production-related subjects and skills (OECD), to focus on human capital production (World Bank) or to become ‘educational services’ opened up to foreign investments (WTO).

The aims or agendas of transnational organisations are to encourage quality learning and teaching, good skills development, and to increase competitiveness among nation states. They are the direct results of neoliberalism since the 1980s (Moutsios, 2009). George (1999) also validated this by stating that “(t)he social and economic reform process of neoliberalism is based on global competition between nations and regions” (Vongalis-Macrow, 2004, p. 490). Actually, neoliberalism and globalisation move in the same direction as Shizha and Kariwo (2011, p. 43) argued that they “have renewed and accelerated the capitalist conception of modernisation in emerging nations of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean”. This capitalist conception has been affecting “government policies for education and training … since the 1980s … to establish the new moral order of schools and schooling, and to produce the new student/subject who is appropriate to (and appropriated by) the neoliberal economy” (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 247). The aim of encouraging competition in schooling, according to neoliberal principles, is to increase ‘productivity, accountability and control’, which represent quality improvement in education (Olssen & Peters, 2005). As a result of such neoliberal reforms, the education system is transformed through the facilitation of the state into an industry of educational services that seek to meet consumer choice and become efficient in the commodification of those services (Woo, 2013). Woo (2013, p. 38) added:

Schools as businesses must add value to students. Self-interested individuals must create value for themselves within this context by making rational economic choices. The market, and not the state, improves the education
system because competition rewards excellent, efficient and productive individuals and organisations.

3.3.2 Neoliberalism and international schools

One strategy of the capitalist class regarding education is the “privatisation of schools and other education providers” (Hill & Kumar, 2012, pp. 1-2). The privatisation of schools, which is a part of creating markets in education, is designed to satisfy parents’ needs and to enable choice by offering a diverse range of schools (Hill & Kumar, 2009). Waterson (2015, pp. 15-16) explained this strategy:

In a neoliberal political and economic climate where the commodification and commercialisation of education is becoming more accepted, TNCs (transnational corporations) may also take a more pragmatic and ‘globalist’ approach in order to pander to the needs of parents who want an instrumentalist education for their children and are increasingly seeing themselves, and being seen, as consumers of education.

According to neoliberal theory, the ‘instrumentalist education’ that is sought by parents can be provided by international schools, which is a popular choice for parents considered members of the ‘elite class’ who are looking for an international education for their children. These schools are becoming popular and are increasing in numbers across the non-English speaking world. Waterson (2015) explained that “in a globalised world characterised by greater economic, social, political, cultural activity crossing national boundaries the demand for schools from transnational elites has grown, and continues to grow, at pace” (p. 2). This fast growth in the internationalising of education is, according to Hayden (2011), the result of two factors. The first is related to the introduction of international elements by national education systems through government education departments and non-government organisations, also facilitated by the ease of technological access. The second factor is related to international education that is provided by international schools, which “rapidly emerged as a means of catering not only for the globally mobile professional classes, but also for the socio-economically advantaged national elites for whom an English-medium form of education is perceived to bestow further advantage” (Hayden, 2011, p. 220). Furthermore, Waterson (2015) explained that
the reason this group of local wealthy elites enrol their children in international schools is because either they are dissatisfied with the education offered by local schools or because they prefer acquiring international qualifications due to a “stiffening of the local positional competition on the one hand and a globalisation of that competition on the other” (Lowe, 2000, p. 27, as cited in Waterson, 2015, p. 3). However, Ball (2012) discussed the exponential growth of international schools in terms of neoliberal regimes treating public education systems as a market, arguing that it has resulted in increasing numbers of private providers of international education. According to Waterson (2015), due to the dominance of neoliberalist attitudes and the facilitation of educational markets, the international school education system is changing noticeably and becoming influential, not only within the international school sector, but also at the national level.

3.3.3 Neoliberalism and international accreditation

In addition to international schools, there are other global education products and services that are promoted by a neoliberalist ideology and are available for those who can afford to acquire them (Giroux, 2002). Examples are “education management systems, professional and curriculum standards, teacher training packages, national testing services, and even well-known university franchises are now part of the global education market” (Romanowski & Romanowski, 2017, p. 71). Another major global education service, considered to be one of the commanding forces of neoliberalism, is the system of accrediting institutions (Baltodano, 2012). Generally representing quality control and accountability, accreditation is considered to be one neoliberal principle that schools should be encouraged to adopt (Hursh & Wall, 2011). In accreditation, neoliberal policies of assessment, quality control and accountability encourage educational institutions “to seek Western accreditation to better market their product” (Romanowski & Romanowski, 2017, p. 72).

3.3.4 Inequality in international schools

According to Waterson (2015), the international school sector plays “an instrumental role in educating a transnational capitalist class that perpetuates a system of neoliberal values
that is inherently unfair” (p. 21). This is because international schools target students that have power and influence due to their social and economic background, or their connection to international organisations, agencies and authorities (Waterson, 2015). However, Ball (1990) argued against such claims by explaining that “inequalities are fair because the market is unprincipled, its effects are unintentional, there is no deliberate bias”; he continued to justify his viewpoint by claiming that the market “produces a natural economic order and the poorer, the losers in the market, will benefit from the progress of the society as a whole” (Ball, 1990, p. 37). On the other hand, Song (2013) argued that due to forces of globalisation (neoliberalism) and parents’ demands, English-medium international schools in South Korea became elite-class generating institutions. These arguments describe the reality of the situation in international schools and to whom these schools target and who can afford them. They are private educational institutions, which the majority of people cannot afford to join; in this sense, inequality does exist. However, it is arguable that local governments should play a role to ensuring the quality of education in public schools provides equal opportunities for all graduates to join higher education institutions, whether they come from private or public schools.

3.3.5 Neoliberalism in Kuwait

In this study, I adopt a neoliberal framework to understand the situation of international bilingual schools in Kuwait and their rapid growth in the last 20 years. I use neoliberalism to explain the rapid market-growth of these schools in Kuwait following the first Gulf War in 1990, as well as use neoliberalism principles to explore MOE policies of facilitating international bilingual schools in Kuwait to establish and grow. Moreover, neoliberal principles are used to analyse the role of international accreditation, with a focus on CIS in this study, and its effect on the privatisation of education and its role in the quality control and accountability of international bilingual schools in Kuwait. Generally, exploring the education system in these schools in Kuwait using a neoliberal framework could lead to new insights because the impact of neoliberalism on educational practices in international schools in Kuwait differs to other countries due to its unique sociocultural context (Huang, 2012).
3.4 Education quality assurance

Cheng’s (2003) conception of education quality assurance was chosen as the theoretical framework to assist in the analysis and interpretation of data because it addresses the issue of education quality appropriately in this study. His conception of ‘total quality control’ covers three main areas: “internal quality, interface quality and future quality” (Cheng, 2003, p. 211). According to this framework, the focus should be on all three areas of quality assurance in order to achieve total quality in education. As Cheng (2003, p. 210) explained:

Although internal quality assurance, interface quality assurance, and future quality assurance are based on different paradigms and they have different strengths and focuses, all of them are important and necessary to provide us with a comprehensive framework to consider and manage education quality in the new century.

These areas of quality assurance are identified by Cheng (2001) as arising amidst waves of reforms in education since the 1970s that are based on different paradigms in relation to education effectiveness. They employ different approaches to (or models of) quality in education. The first wave of reforms (internal quality assurance), initiated in the 1970s, concentrates predominantly on internal effectiveness and performance of teaching and learning processes and methods (Cheng, 2003). One main target of this wave is the improvement in teacher quality and performance of students against identifiable standards set by the state and/or the accredited agencies. The second wave of reforms (interface quality assurance), initiated in the 1990s, focuses on the accountability of educators to stakeholders. Its quality assurance concentrates on stakeholders’ satisfaction, education quality and market competitiveness (Cheng, 2003). The third wave of reforms (future quality assurance) was initiated after 2000 to meet the needs and challenges of globalisation and the information technology era. Its quality assurance emphasis is on “future effectiveness in terms of relevance to the new paradigm of education concerning contextualised multiple intelligences, globalisation, localisation and individualisation” (Cheng, 2003, p. 203). These three waves of educational reforms provide a general
classification that presents the major paradigms and educational reform movements during these periods.

3.4.1 Internal quality assurance

Quality assurance in this wave is mainly directed towards improving the internal methods and processes of education in relation to teaching and learning in order to achieve the planned outcomes and goals (Cheng, 1997). Here, educational quality is similar to education effectiveness as the quality measured by goals and outcomes that are accomplished; “the higher achievement in planned education goals implies the better quality in education” (Cheng, 2003, p. 204).

There are eight models, according to Cheng (1996) and Cheng and Tam (1997), that can be used to understand, manage and ensure education quality in terms of its internal environment and processes (internal quality assurance) and its interface with stakeholders (interface quality assurance). Out of these eight models, three models will be discussed here as they relate to internal quality assurance: (i) goal and specification model concerned with institute goal achievement; (ii) process model concerned with process development; and (ii) the absence of a problem model concerned with the prevention of internal problems (Cheng, 2003).

The goal and specification model assumes that in the education system or institution there are clear, long-term, normative and achievable goals and specifications, as standards and benchmarks, which are being adopted and followed. Education quality, according to this model, is the attainment of specified goals and/or conformance of standards or benchmarks with specifications listed in the education program (curriculum) of the system or institution. Accordingly, the model of quality assurance ensures the achievement of such goals and standards. When using this model, examples of quality indicators may include “students’ academic achievements, attendance rate, drop-out rate, and personal developments, number of graduates enrolled in universities or graduate schools, staff’s professional qualifications …” (Cheng, 2003, p. 204).
The process model assumes that the nature of internal processes of an educational institution determines the degree of quality of the output and goals accomplished. Internal processes, generally, include learning, teaching and management processes. Education quality assurance, according to this model, is the existence of healthy internal processes, which lead to internal improvement and progress. Using this model, examples of quality indicators may include “management quality indicators (e.g. leadership, decision making), teaching quality indicators (e.g. teaching efficacy, teaching methods), and learning quality indicators (e.g. learning attitudes, attendance rate)” (Cheng, 2003, p. 205).

The absence of a problem model assumes that the degree of quality of any educational institution depends on the absence of any sort of problems, which may include difficulties or weaknesses that may cause dysfunction in the internal system. According to this model, monitoring the educational institution and using continuous reporting to prevent the occurrence of a problems that may cause deficiencies to the internal operations and processes are main elements of education quality assurance. “This model is useful, particularly when the criteria of education quality are really unclear but the strategies for internal improvement are needed” (Cheng, 2003, p. 205).

3.4.2 Interface quality assurance

Quality assurance in this wave is mainly directed towards satisfying the diverse needs and expectations of different stakeholders, such as students, parents and policy-makers, and ensuring accountability to the community. According to this wave of reform, the quality assurance of education refers to efforts that are made to improve quality standards of educational services in order to meet the expectations of stakeholders and to ensure accountability to the public. Some measures used to ensure quality assurance in this wave include “institutional monitoring, institutional self-evaluation, quality inspection, use of quality indicators and benchmarks, survey of key stakeholders' satisfaction, accountability reporting to the community, parental and community involvement in school governance, institutional development planning, school chatter, and performance-based funding” (Cheng, 2003, p. 206).
Among the eight models of quality assurance of Cheng and Tam (1997), five can be used to understand and ensure the quality of education in terms of interface quality assurance. These five models are: (i) resource-input model (focuses on the quality of resources acquired from the community); (ii) satisfaction model (focuses on satisfying the expectations of the powerful stakeholders); (iii) legitimacy model (focuses on the reputation of the institution and winning public support in the community); (iv) organisational learning model (focuses on continuous organisational learning); and (v) total quality management model (focuses on managing resources and processes to meet stakeholders’ expectations).

The resource-input model assumes that necessary resources are vital to achieve planned objectives and to deliver the required educational services. Therefore, according to this model, the education quality is perceived as the outcome and achievement as a result of the availability of essential resources and input for the educational institution. Quality assurance, by this model, is directed towards acquiring various quality resources and input by the educational institution in a suitable environment to provide proper educational services. When using this model, examples of quality indicators may include “high quality student intake, more qualified staff recruited, better facilities and equipment, better staff-students ratio, and more financial support procured from the central education authority, alumni, parents, sponsoring body or any outside agents” (Cheng, 2003, p. 206).

In the satisfaction model, education quality is mainly focused on satisfying the expectations of major stakeholders. The quality of education in this model is usually assessed by using a survey to evaluate the stakeholders’ satisfaction. Accordingly, quality assurance depends on the measures taken to ensure that educational services and practices meet the expectations of stakeholders.

According to the legitimacy model, the educational institution has to gain community support, form a good reputation, and be committed to accountability in order to achieve legitimacy in the community. Therefore, quality assurance in this model generally depends on interface engagements and accomplishments, such as building up public image,
marketing the institution’s competences, promoting its credentials, and assuring accountability policies to the community. “The current emphasis on parental choice and accountability in educational reforms in both Western and Eastern societies seems to support the importance of the legitimacy model to assessing school education quality” (Cheng, 2003, p. 207).

The organisational learning model assumes that education quality is an active concept, which involves continuous development and the progression of staff, teaching and learning methods, processes and output of an educational institution. Therefore, according to this model, education quality assurance focuses on active management, staff improvement programs and PD plans. Examples of education quality indicators in this model may include “an awareness of community needs and changes, internal process monitoring, program evaluation, environmental analysis, PD, and development planning, etc.” (Cheng, 2003, p. 207).

The totally quality management model is considered “a powerful tool to enhance education quality and increase school effectiveness” (Cheng, 2003, p. 207). In this model, education quality is defined as a group of connected elements of the education process (input, process, output) at an educational institute, which leads to the satisfaction of all stakeholders because it meets their expectations (Cheng, 1995). Accordingly, the quality assurance of education in this model is the total management of all input and resources, staff, internal process and interface factors to produce the necessary output that meets the needs of stakeholders.

### 3.4.3 Future quality assurance

Education quality in this wave is mainly focused on the relevance of education to the future needs of students, the community and society. Relevance means enabling them to meet the emerging challenges and requirements of the 21st century. Therefore, the future quality assurance of education refers to measures taken to formulate goals, content, teaching and learning methods, processes, practices and outcomes of education that are relevant to future and new generations (Cheng, 2003).
In this wave of reform, there is a paradigm shift away from a traditional thinking of education. A new way of thinking about quality assurance is introduced, based on two main elements: (i) ‘triplisation’ (learning at individualised, localised and globalised levels); and (ii) contextualised multiple intelligences (CMI). CMI ensures “multiple developments in the technological, economic, social, political, cultural, and learning aspects” (Cheng, 2003, p. 208).

According to these initiatives, the emphasis will be on the development of student CMI individualised, localised and globalised learning processes in education. It is not only student learning that should be ‘triplised’ but also the students themselves should be individualised, localised and globalised.

Individualised education means that students and their learning should be personalised in such a way that knowledge, values and technology have to be transferred, developed and adapted during the learning process to suit their own characteristics and meet their needs, which leads to their capacity to achieve optimal potential, especially in their CMI. Students should be offered different styles of learning so they can choose ones that suit them. There should be different educational programs and subjects (including a variety of objectives, content, teaching and learning methods, assessment tasks and schedules) offered for them to choose from. In individualised learning, students are at the centre of education. They are encouraged to be self-motivated and guided to be independent in their learning, so they can adopt life-long learning.

Localised and globalised education means that students and their learning should be localised and globalised in a way that multiple (local and global) resources and networks are organised to facilitate the appropriate local and globalised support and opportunities for them to achieve diverse improvements in their learning. In this manner, they are not limited in their learning that is taught by school teachers, but many sources become available inside the school, local community and society, and globally. Local education programs (curricula) and international learning (education) can benefit students in acquiring local knowledge and experiences, as well as expand their awareness of global context and
education. Learning in a localised and globalised education environment is more effective because it offers networks for group students to communicate, function and exchange experiences and knowledge locally and internationally. Mutual sharing and inspiring locally and globally play a major role in sustaining the learning environment and expanding it widely. A good example is accredited to bilingual international schools where these contexts provide students with local and international education curricula and programs, and through accreditation, student learning can be shared and increased through a network of international schools around the world. In these schools, students have the opportunity to learn and benefit from international teachers who are experienced in international education and also with learning materials that are recognised and designed by experts from around the world. Thus, their learning in international schools could be of a world-class standard if implemented properly. According to Cheng (2003), in globalised and localised learning, “learning opportunities are unlimited. Students can maximise the opportunities for their learning from local and global exposures through the internet, web-based learning, video-conferencing, cross-cultural sharing, and the use of different types of interactive and multi-media materials” (p. 209).

3.4.4 Quality assurance in bilingual schools in Kuwait

Looking for an appropriate framework to understand, analyse and interpret data for the quality of the education theme was not an easy task because it is a wide field involved in most areas of education in this study. Cheng’s (2003) education quality assurance conceptual framework is the most suitable concept for this research as it covers all areas of study associated with international bilingual schools in Kuwait. By using this framework, it is possible to analyse data collected from students, parents, teachers, coordinators, principals, directors, chairpersons, a MOE official and a CIS official, and find meaningful connections between all levels of education quality (internal, interface and future) to gain comprehensive insight into the education quality assurance in these schools in Kuwait. In the case of the internal quality assurance part of the concept, it is used to make reference to factors that contribute to standards in internal quality assurance in these schools (such as qualified and experienced staff) and how they can be measured (e.g. through academic
achievements of students). For the interface quality assurance part of the concept, there are many interrelated elements (parents’ expectation and satisfaction, national educational policies, accreditation measures and parental involvement in school governance) that need to be analysed in order to understand their effect on the interface education quality. For the future quality assurance part of the concept, it is necessary to analyse the effects of bilingual education (Arabic and international curricula) and teaching and learning methods (learner-centred and differentiation in teaching) on student leaning capabilities and future opportunities as part of future quality assurance of education in these schools.

3.5 Conclusion

As shown in previous sections in this chapter, three theoretical and conceptual frameworks are presented: (i) cosmopolitanism theoretical framework; (ii) neoliberalism theoretical framework; and (iii) education quality assurance conceptual framework. Each framework was identified and explained in detail, particularly in regard to the areas related to my study. The usage of these theories and concepts in connection to my study are highlighted briefly. A detailed analysis and interpretation of data using the frameworks is conducted in Chapter 8: Findings and Discussion. The following chapter addresses the research methodology. Here, I describe my research journey, collection of my data and philosophical assumptions, research methodology, data collection methods, data analysis and representation and ethical issues involved in conducting the research in the context of international schools in Kuwait.
Chapter Four: Research Methodology

4.1 Overview

To understand the priorities that govern the development of international schools in Kuwait, a qualitative interpretive methodological perspective is used to explore the perceptions of different participants involved in these schools. In this chapter, the research method that supports the investigation is described. The qualitative approach, ethnography, used in this research is discussed and justified. Detailed descriptions of the steps taken in the research is outlined, beginning with a brief summary of the research, followed by a detailed explanation of the research design, which includes the research methodology, conduct of the research, research theme and questions, context(s) and sample(s), interview questions, data collection, data analysis, research ethics and conclusion.

4.2 Research summary

Investigating the phenomenon of international schools in Kuwait is a complex process, especially given the holistic approach taken to study this phenomenon. Many connected areas relating to international schools are covered in this research, including the rapid increase in the number of international schools in Kuwait, teaching and learning from students and teachers, the principal’s viewpoint and parents’ motivations and expectations in choosing such schools for their children. In addition, there is a need to examine MOE policies toward international schools in Kuwait, and the international accreditation organisations’ influence on international schools in Kuwait. All these issues are related and focussed toward the quality of international schools in Kuwait.

Three accredited international bilingual schools, which teach Arabic and international English curricula, have been selected for this study. Care was taken in choosing a representative sample of the majority of bilingual international schools in Kuwait. Each school represents a certain category. The first school has a reputation for ‘high quality’ education, while the second school favours a more conservative Islamic approach, and the third school offers special needs and inclusive education in addition to mainstream classes.
A total of 67 participants connected to these schools in various ways were interviewed to ascertain their perspectives and experiences about the issues to be studied. These participants included students, parents, teachers, counsellors, curriculum coordinators, PD coordinators, accreditation coordinators, principals, superintendents, board members (or owners), MOE officials and representatives of CIS.

As mentioned earlier, I am very familiar with Kuwaiti international schools and the context of their operations. Some years ago, two years before I conducted my research, I worked for seven years as a teacher in two of the three schools being studied. I taught at elementary, middle and high school levels and managed the English as a Second Language (ESL) Department at one of these schools. According to Fay (1996), in explaining the understanding of the ‘insider’: “You have to be one to know one” (p. 27). The researcher must have shared the experience to be able to grasp the fullness of the extent of the participants’ experiences. My ‘shared experience’ as an insider is key to my knowledge of the lives of those who are interviewed for this study (Fay, 1996). My experience as an insider was valuable when planning this research project. Being knowledgeable of the research context (Kuwait and its international schools) and having access to networks at various levels of school operations facilitated the design, and I expected it to assist in the initiation of the research study. On the other hand, my situation of being an insider who previously worked in two of the researched schools could lead to obstacles such as “making wrong assumptions about the research process based on … prior knowledge” (Unluer, 2012, p. 1), and “access to privileged information” (Unluer, 2012, p. 2). Recognising my past experience, all necessary and ethically correct procedures in relation to the conduct of interviews were taken to avoid any sort of biasness and wrong assumptions. I maintained a neutral stance at all stages of the study. All interviews were digitally recorded and all data that were collected during the interviews are evaluated equally and presented in the analysis and findings chapter of the thesis.
4.3 Philosophical assumptions

Given the complexity of the research topic, a qualitative research approach is deemed most suitable for this study. This approach focuses on schools’ contexts and interprets the emergent data (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). The purpose of using a qualitative research approach is “to explore the behaviour, perspectives and experiences” (Holloway, 1997, p. 2) of all parties involved in the education process in these schools. The interpretive approach of qualitative research is essential to reach an understanding of the phenomena of international schools in this study.

As a qualitative researcher, I brought my own beliefs and learning paradigms to the research project and recognised their role in informing the conduct and writing of my qualitative study. With appropriate philosophical assumptions and paradigms, good qualitative research should be shaped by an interpretive and theoretical framework (Creswell, 2007).

(The) philosophical assumptions consist of a stance toward the nature of reality (ontology), how the researcher knows what she or he knows (epistemology), the role of values in the research (axiology), the language of research (rhetoric), and the methods used in the process (methodology). (Creswell, 2007, p. 16).

4.3.1 Ontology

“The ontological issue relates to the nature of reality and its characteristics” (Creswell, 2007, p. 17); in other words: “What can be known and how” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010, p. 4). While teaching in Kuwait, I began to question the quality of teaching and learning, as well as the effectiveness of the accreditation process in Kuwait’s international schools. This reflection generated my research topic: The quality of international schools in Kuwait in terms of history, ideology and practice. After researching and reading many relevant resources, I decided that the ‘quality of education’ was wider than just the accreditation process and the measurement of student achievement. It includes many connected issues and involves various parties. Thus when interviewing participants with varied experiences and backgrounds who were involved in these schools, I anticipated the likelihood of
uncovering multiple realities resulting from their perspectives in the shape of quotes and themes (Creswell, 2007).

### 4.3.2 Epistemology

“An epistemology is a philosophical belief system about who can be a knower” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010, p. 4). “Epistemology is concerned with providing a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure they are both adequate and legitimate” (Maynard, 1994, p. 10). The epistemological stance I adopted here is a constructivist epistemology where “(t)rust, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world” (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). That is why part of such engagement, for me, is to be close to the participants and spend considerable time with them in their context and study field which enables him or her to become an ‘insider’ (Creswell, 2007). “Insider epistemology claims that knowing others is equivalent to having their experiences, and assumes on this basis that only those alike in all relevant respects can know one another” (Fay, 1996, p. 26). I lived in Kuwait and worked at two of the international schools under study for seven years; I also spent approximately seven months during data collection in the region visiting, communicating and interviewing participants. Therefore, being an insider facilitated my role as a researcher but sometimes it presented challenges and obstacles that I needed to overcome.

### 4.3.3 Axiology

In terms of axiology (third assumption), the qualitative researcher has a responsibility to clarify the values and biases brought to the research, and to make them explicit in conjunction with the value-laden nature of the study, which includes participants and the field as a whole (Creswell, 2007). The idea for this research regarding the quality of international schools in Kuwait developed as a result of my experience as a teacher in two of the schools under study and through contact with friends and colleagues teaching in international schools in Kuwait. Therefore, I made assumptions about the quality of international schools in Kuwait in general and the three schools under study during the initiation of the project. While recognising the significance of this history through an
effective research design, I sought to ensure that subjective judgments or biases would not limit the project. On the contrary, I aimed to meet and interview numerous individuals with different backgrounds and perspectives who are involved in education in these schools and to obtain their opinions and voluntary responses to questions presented to them. Up to 45 interviews were proposed and four focus group interviews. The interviewees included educators who are well known in this field in Kuwait and the Gulf region. I presume that this amount of data will facilitate a clear understanding of the situation of this study and avoid any effect of bias or assumed values.

4.3.4 Rhetorical discourse

The fourth assumption, rhetorical discourse, implies that “(q)ualitative researchers tend to embrace the rhetorical assumption that the writing needs to be personal and literary in form” (Creswell, 2007, p. 18). Using the first person pronoun, writing the research in a narrative style and using metaphors are features often found in qualitative research writing (Creswell, 2007). Due to my personal involvement in the field, my intention has always been to deal with the project as a personal research journey. I expect that a personal and literary form is the best way to combine my insider knowledge and field notes during the data collection process.

4.3.5 Procedures of qualitative research

The ‘procedures of qualitative research’ is the fifth assumption, which relates to “the researcher’s experience in collecting and analysing the data” (Creswell, 2007, p. 19). The qualitative researcher relates to and “uses inductive logic, studies the topic within its context, and uses an emerging design” (Creswell, 2007, p. 17). Since designing the research questions, the study has been adapted to engage with the research problem. Initially, the focus of the research was on the accreditation process of international schools in Kuwait. However, after discussing with my supervisors and reading about related areas, it was necessary to widen the area of this research to include the quality of education, and the history, ideology and practice of these schools as these areas are connected and would aid
my investigation to understand the complete phenomenon of international schools in Kuwait. Additionally, these areas have not been investigated before in this context.

In addition to the assumptions that underpin my research, which are discussed above, it is important to guide the research inquiry with a ‘basic set of beliefs’ (paradigms) (Guba, 1990). For this research, I found constructivism paradigm principles appropriate to the practice of this research.

### 4.4 Social constructivism paradigm

In social constructivism, “individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences – meanings directed toward certain objects or things” (Creswell, 2007, p. 20). In this paradigm, the researcher deals with different meanings and views collected from participants in a certain situation (Creswell, 2007). These meanings are the result of social interactions between individuals and their living, historical and cultural experiences, which enable the inquirer to “generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meaning” (Creswell, 2007, p. 21).

The questions asked by the researcher to participants are broad, general and open-ended to allow the answers to reflect the meaning of their thoughts and experiences. The researcher’s role was to listen attentively, not only to what participants said, but also to examine how and why they said it, in addition to observing what they did and how they acted in their ‘life setting’. In this way, meaning is constructed in a certain context and situation by people who are involved in the study.

Researchers also often approach and comment analytically on the processes of interaction with participants to reach a clearer analysis of the meaning emerging from the situation. The context of the study occupies a major space of research because it enables the inquirer to understand the historical and cultural settings affecting the participants’ characters and beliefs.
Researchers using this paradigm recognise that their background (personal, cultural and historical experiences) shapes their interpretation of the meanings that participants have about the world. Therefore, it is not only the participant’s interpretations that constitute the emerging meaning, but also the researcher’s interpretation of the interpretations. “This is why qualitative research is often called ‘interpretive research’” (Creswell, 2007, p. 21).

4.5 Interpretive position

Another philosophical stance, but at a lesser level, is choosing a certain interpretive position or interpretive community (Creswell, 2007). Denzin and Lincoln (as cited in Creswell, 2007) asserted, “These interpretive stances shape the individuals studied; the types of questions and problems examined; the approaches to data collection, data analysis, writing, and evaluation; and the use of the information to change society or add to social justice” (Creswell, 2007, p. 30).

According to Robson (2011), in the interpretive paradigm, there is no single reality, and it is based on perceptions and experiences of the individual. Interpretivists view the world through observing and seeking patterns to explain wider principles (Babbie, 2005). In this research, an interpretive position is adopted because it is considered that there are multiple realities of participant experiences. The researcher may better understand real-world phenomena of international schools in Kuwait by interviewing the stakeholders involved in these schools and listening to their experiences and perspectives. In this case, the researcher acted as a ‘passionate participant’ and ‘created knowledge’ by interacting with the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

4.6 Research methodology

“Within these worldviews and through these (theoretical) lenses are approaches to qualitative inquiry” (Creswell, 2007, p. 35), and these approaches are “general way(s) of thinking about conducting qualitative research. (They) … describe, either explicitly or implicitly, the purpose of the qualitative research, the role of the researcher(s), the stages of research, and the method of data analysis” (Trochim, 2006, p. 1). Creswell (2007) argued:
(They are) appropriate to use to study a research problem when the problem needs to be explored; when a complex, detailed understanding is needed; when the researcher wants to write in a literary, flexible style; and when the researcher seeks to understand the context or settings of participants (Creswell, 2007, p. 51).

Some of these theoretical lenses are described by Creswell (2007) as the five most popular approaches to research: (i) narrative research; (ii) phenomenology; (iii) grounded theory; (iv) ethnography; and (v) case study. Choosing the most suitable approach depends on the study focus of the research problem. This study uses ethnography as the focus of the research as it is the requirement of the research to arrive at a detailed understanding of the complex situation of the culture of international schools in Kuwait.

4.6.1 Ethnographic research

“Ethnography is a qualitative design in which the researcher describes and interprets the shared and learned patterns of values, behaviours, beliefs, and language of a culture-sharing group” (Harris, 1968, as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 68). It “focuses on an entire culture (cultural) group … in a way of studying a culture-sharing group as well as the final, written product of that research” (Creswell, 2007, p. 68). Ethnography “has enriched our understanding of how individuals and groups behave in various communities and organisations … and has been located in a variety of settings such as schools, hospitals, jazz clubs and street corners” (Arthur, 2012, p. 80).

In this study, international schools in Kuwait are seen as organisational cultures in which many individuals (students, parents, teachers, principals, counsellors, coordinators, superintendents, board members, accreditation officers, and MOE officials) interact socially, share certain domains of experience, encounter various values and beliefs, and have specific perceptions. Schools can create complex situations as they involve different parties, such as students, teachers, parents and government. The aim of this project is to investigate the school as a whole phenomenon from different perspectives to cover many areas that have not been studied before. This research project requires listening and collecting “rich, holistic insights into people’s views and actions, as well as the nature (that
is, sights, sounds) of the location they inhabit” (Reeves et al., 2008, p. 512). This is achievable by using ethnography as “(t)he time to collect data is extensive, involving prolonged time in the field” (Creswell, 2007, p. 72).

“There are many forms of ethnography, such as a confessional ethnography, life history, auto-ethnography, feminist ethnography, ethnographic novels, the visual ethnography found in photography and video, and electronic media” (Creswell, 2007, p. 69). There is also realist and critical ethnography (Creswell, 2007).

The purpose of this research is to “specify an issue to explore” (Creswell, 2007, p. 71), such as the quality of education in international schools in Kuwait and maybe “advocate and call for changes” (Creswell, 2007, p. 71) to improve the situation.

4.6.2 Research theme

New schools opening every year in Kuwait aim to be accredited as an international school in order to meet the expectations of parents, students and society when providing quality international education. Therefore, in such schools, the education process is generally complex due to the involvement of many stakeholders. This is especially the case in Kuwait and other Arab countries, where a different language (English) and Western curricula are taught without clear and planned educational policies designated by government as appropriate to the needs of the citizenry. Over-reliance on teachers, curriculum and accreditation agencies from the West, without clear local educational policies to organise and oversee international schools in Kuwait, can hinder some aspects of educational development in these schools.

In Kuwait, many issues surrounding international schools that have not been researched and need urgent attention in order to understand and manage the rapid growth of this influential education sector include Western curriculum, national educational policies and international accreditation. Therefore, the aim of this research is to investigate these issues with a particular focus on the quality of education in these schools. As can be seen below, the research questions cover different areas and directions, of which all are necessary to
understand and explain the impact of international schools (and international education) on identity, culture and quality in the specific context of Kuwait. Sociologically, this is an approach that considers the macro, meso and micro elements of a given phenomenon or problem.

4.6.3 Research questions

Principal research question

What priorities govern the development of international schools in Kuwait?

Supporting sub-questions

1. What core factors contributed to the emergence and rapid growth of international schools in Kuwait?

2. Why do some Kuwaiti parents choose international schools for their children? To what extent do their experiences meet their expectations?

3. How do considerations around international accreditation influence the organisation and practice of international schools in Kuwait?

4. How do international schools respond to requirements from official bodies, such as the Kuwaiti Ministry of Education (MOE) and demands for ‘quality education’ in international schools in Kuwait?

The research question and sub-questions all begin with ‘what’ and ‘how’ and suit my ethnographic approach to this qualitative research. This is because “(e)thnographers usually begin with an open-ended question and try to explore what is happening in the field” (Bhatti, 2011, p. 81).

The research questions were designed in this form to encompass all areas of the research problem and to match the research purpose of investigating the priorities that govern the development of international schools in Kuwait. Answering the questions will require a description of the phenomenon of international schools in Kuwait.

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Aspects of this phenomenon will be represented by answering the sub-questions and finding the nature of relationships between them. This will aid in understanding how international education in Kuwait is impacted by global agendas. The research questions are designed to gather relevant data provided by stakeholders on the situation of international schools in Kuwait. This data will offer insight into the effectiveness, growth and social change, educational policy and culture, and practice of these schools. Therefore, the response to each sub-question will provide the researcher with knowledge about each part of the main phenomenon.

I started the sub-questions by seeking information about the history and growth of these schools because it will reveal the reasons for establishing these schools and the context, criteria and circumstances in which international schools have grown exponentially in Kuwait. Knowing the reasons and circumstances of this growth is important as it is the background of an important era in Kuwaiti history, and the inception of international schools is connected to other parts of this study. The second sub-question is related to the reasons that motivate parents to choose such schools for educating their children. The answer to this question will help to provide explanations of the parents’ reasons for choosing such schools, shed light on their social and cultural context, and elicit their views and perceptions of the quality and effectiveness of education in these schools. The next question is about international academic standards and performance, which are monitored by accreditation organisations. This will provide further insight into how quality is understood in international schools in Kuwait. The last question relates to measures and regulations that are taken by the MOE to ensure effectiveness and adherence to local and international standards. This is considered to be a central part of the research question as it is relevant to international academic standards and local educational policy.

4.6.4 Sites

In this section, the context of the research is discussed. It is not only international schools themselves but also the broader context in which they exist. This is due to this phenomenon being studied from ‘a holistic perspective’ where it is observed as a cultural concept that
represents many elements “such as social structure … political structure, and the social relations or function among” (Creswell, 2007, p. 71) individuals and parties who are involved in the education process of these schools. The broader context (macro level) includes Kuwaiti society, the Kuwaiti education system and the country as a whole because these schools interact with this context and have mutual effects with them. By ‘mutual effects’ I mean, on the one hand, the effects of the Western curriculum and international education offered by these schools on the local students; on the other hand, the effects of the local culture, local educational policies, and the global educational policy agenda on these schools.

The schools (or sites), and their context (Kuwait) were selected, as a ‘cultural group’ site(s). They were chosen using a criterion sampling strategy where they are “cases that meet some criterion” (Miles et al., 1984, p. 28).

Although the focus of this study is on three bilingual international schools in Kuwait as sites of the research and as representatives of bilingual schools, Kuwait is, in this study, considered a (big) site “in which an intact culture-sharing group has developed shared values, beliefs, and assumptions” (Creswell, 2007, p. 122). This will be the meso level of inquiry where institutional arrangements are part of the field and necessary to understand the dynamics shaping the individual schools.

There are two reasons for choosing the three bilingual international schools under study. Firstly, bilingual international schools operated by local organisations were chosen instead of other kinds of international schools (e.g. American, British, or Canadian operated) because the rapid increase in this kind of school is noticeable and they are becoming more popular in Kuwait because they teach both Arabic and international English curricula. Their emergence can be seen, in part, as a response to the presence of international schools run by Western administration. Secondly, the issue of representativeness was also taken into consideration. Each school, as can be seen in Table 4.1, represents a certain category. The first school, Community Bilingual School (CBS), has a reputation for the quality of education it delivers. CBS is renowned for this locally and many of its graduates have
achieved good results in highly-ranked universities worldwide. This reputation is also suggested in the International Schools Review, describing CBS as “the elite school in Kuwait” (Vitaminz, 2013). The second school, Cultural Identity Bilingual School (CIBS), provides a more conservative Islamic environment where male and female students are segregated in two different buildings and additional Islamic subjects are taught in the Arabic curriculum. Islamic dress code is obligatory for students and staff, and it prefers to employ practising Muslim staff. Many bilingual schools follow these practices. The third school, Inclusion Bilingual School (IBS), offers special-needs schooling and inclusive education in addition to mainstream schooling, and many bilingual schools also follow this path.

Table 4.1  Research sites and settings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Name</th>
<th>Ownership and Management</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Bilingual School (CBS)</td>
<td>Established and owned by one lady. It was established and still operates as a not-for-profit school. It is managed by a board consisting mostly of well-qualified, educated parents.</td>
<td>Bilingual school: Local Arabic curriculum for Arabic subjects and American/Canadian curriculum. Student number is around 2200. Majority of students (more than 95%) are from well-educated, wealthy Kuwaiti families. It is not segregated. The school is accredited by international accreditation organisations, including the Council of International Schools (CIS). It has a reputation of delivering high quality education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Identity Bilingual School (CIBS)</td>
<td>Established and also managed by a group of women but owned by a charity.</td>
<td>Bilingual school: Local Arabic curriculum and American curriculum. Student number is around 1900. Majority of students (more than 95%) are from educated Kuwaiti families. It is segregated. The school is accredited by the CIS agency. It has a reputation of providing bilingual education with a conservative Islamic context and a focus on Islamic studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion Bilingual School (IBS)</td>
<td>Established by many shareholders. It was sold to an investment company which manages it as a for-profit school.</td>
<td>Bilingual school: Local Arabic curriculum and American curriculum. Student number is around 2480. Majority of students (more than 95%) are from educated Kuwaiti families. Classes are segregated but female and male students study in the same building. The school is accredited by the CIS agency. The school is popular for providing special needs and inclusion education in addition to mainstream education.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To gain access to these schools, I applied for a permission letter to be issued by the MOE. This letter facilitated my mission and validated the research procedures ethically. In addition, this letter requested access of a formal nature and enhanced the credibility of my research among individuals associated with the schools I was researching.

The process of applying for and receiving this letter was lengthy and complex. There were many gatekeepers at all levels, who had the “power and influence to grant and deny access” (Daymon & Holloway, 2010, p. 62) and therefore I expected to negotiate with all of them to facilitate the issuance of this letter.

After receiving the permission letter, I contacted many members of my network to facilitate meetings with targeted individuals and school administration officers to plan and arrange my interviews. I started with CIBS because it was easily accessible and I was familiar with its school context. After completing the interviews at CIBS, I moved to the other schools. Starting in a familiar context was logical because it was my first experience in interviewing; it enabled me to strengthen my interview skills and avoid any pitfalls in the other schools.

### 4.6.5 Participants

Participants in this study were chosen using several sampling strategies. Due to my previous knowledge of the context and settings of the study, I used a ‘big net approach’ (Creswell, 2007) to select certain categories (such as students and parents, depending on the researching questions) of participants in these schools. However, an ‘opportunistic sampling strategy’ (Creswell, 2007) was also used to choose new categories of participants (such as curriculum, accreditation and PD coordinators) as a result of ‘new leads’ into specific research areas. In addition, I used a criterion sampling strategy to select certain categories of participants “based on gaining some perspective on chronological time in the social life of the group, people representative of the culture-sharing group in terms of demographics, and the contexts that lead to different forms of behaviour” (Creswell, 2007, p. 129). Demographically, participants from each school (site) in this study were
representatives of their school context, which was distinguished in certain areas and educational policies.

As stated earlier, this research study covers many different areas related to international schools in Kuwait: (i) history; (ii) rapid growth; (iii) parents’ choice of international schools and their satisfaction; (iv) curriculum and school system; (v) national educational policies; (vi) international accreditation; and (vii) quality. For this reason, participants from each school were chosen from diverse social categories so they could share their experience and perspective to the relevant research area.

I was able to interview 29 students (10 female and 19 male), 10 parents (2 female and 8 male), seven high school teachers (3 female and 4 male), three academic counsellors (2 female and 1 male), six female coordinators (which included accreditation, curriculum and PD coordinators), three HSP (1 female and 2 male), three directors (2 female and 1 male), three female heads of the school board, one male MOE officer and one male CIS director. The total number of participants in these schools was 66 (29 female and 37 male). The sample size in this study matches the recommendations by Bernard (2000), “Most studies are based on sample between 30-60 interviews for ethno-science” (p. 178, as cited in Mason, 2010). The students to be interviewed were placed in four focus groups. At the beginning of the data collection process, one focus group was to be conducted with a limited number of students in each school, but since CIBS segregates its male and female students, it was necessary to interview them separately. Therefore, all students were interviewed in CIBS, which increased the number of students and interviews. In IBS, female students were not able to attend the focus group interview for cultural reasons. In total, 38 individual interviews (20 females and 18 males) and four focus groups (which included 19 male and 10 female) were conducted in this research. Thus, the gender ratio for individual interviews in this study was close, but in total male students was double the number of female students. However, the 10 female students who were interviewed was considered adequate to represent this category’s point of view.
The directors and HSPs of these schools arranged for me to access their schools and invite potential participants. They were the ‘gatekeepers’ of these sites who played a major role in permitting me to be on site during my research period. All participants in the three schools were invited and provided with a full description about the research study before they agreed to be interviewed. Most interviews were conducted on site except for a few, due to time constraints or individual preferences, where participants preferred to meet outside the school. All interviews were conducted confidentially and no one had an access to the responses except the researcher. Table 4.2 shows the demographics of all participants in this study.

### Table 4.2 Participant profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Participant (Pseudonym name)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Research category</th>
<th>Job/Grade/Nationality</th>
<th>Research activity</th>
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<td>M</td>
<td>CIS official</td>
<td>Head of Department (British)</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.7 Data collection methods

Generally, “(i)n an ethnographic study, the investigator collects descriptions of behaviour through observations, interviewing, documents, and artefacts (Hammersely & Atkinson,
1995; Spradley, 1980), although observing and interviewing appear to be the most popular forms of ethnographic data collection” (Creswell, 2007, p. 131).

“Descriptive and reflective notes (i.e. notes about (my) experiences, hunches, and learnings)” (Creswell, 2007, p. 134) were recorded and reported at every stage of the research, from the time of applying for permission from the MOE in Kuwait until the last interview is conducted. These recorded reports will be used in the analysis to understand the full picture of the context and establish meanings.

All participants, except students who were invited to take part in a focus group, were interviewed through a semi-structured interview method. Generally, the interview questions will seek information about six main topics: (i) history and rapid growth of international schools; (ii) parents’ choice and satisfaction; (iii) curriculum and school system; (iv) national education system; (v) accreditation and accountability policies; and (vi) quality of education.

4.7.1 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are used in this study because they serve the purpose of seeking to “explore meaning and perceptions to gain better understanding … (and enable) the interviewee to share rich descriptions of phenomena while leaving the interpretation or analysis to the investigators” (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 314). Using this method, a list of questions is used as a guide to allow the interviewer the freedom “to probe and explore within … predetermined inquiry areas. Interview guides ensure good use of limited interview time; they make interviewing multiple subjects more systemic and comprehensive; and they help to keep interactions focused” (Hoepfl, 1997, p. 52). Interviews are often used to collect data that are conducted from an emic perspective (Olson, 2011). “An emic perspective is one of the hallmarks of qualitative research (Fetterman, 2008), because the objective is to learn as much as possible about an experience directly from the person who had the experience and who is able to describe it” (Olson, 2011, p. 15).
A total of 38 individual semi-structured interviews were conducted in this study. Those interviews were conducted with 10 parents of different students, seven high school teachers, three academic counsellors, six coordinators (accreditation, curriculum and PD coordinators), three HSPs, three directors, three chairpersons, one MOE Head of Department (HOD) and one CIS director. The average duration of each interview was 30 minutes. Most interviews took place on school sites, except for a few, which took place outside the school, as requested by the participants. All interviews were audio-recorded after gaining permission from the participants. Participants in Kuwaiti culture, especially from an Arabic background, are not familiar with research interviews and procedures. Therefore, I had to explain the necessity of signing the permission letter and the protocols around recording the interviews.

Interview questions for all participants generally covered the main research areas but from different angles. Each category of participants had a set of research questions that covered certain parts of the major areas of research, as shown below.

Interview questions used in parent interviews (Appendix J) are aimed at collecting data that cover the reasons for choosing an international school for their children; their children’s experiences in these schools and the effect of these schools on their identity; their perspectives about the curricula, teachers, principals and administration; the effect of international education on their children’s future; and their general satisfaction and evaluation of these schools in relation to expectations about the future of their children in a changing world. The parents’ interviews therefore aim to address research question number three: the reasons that motivated them to choose international schools for their children and whether their experiences meet their expectations. In addition, the parents are asked to give their perspectives about most of the research areas that are related to the remaining sub-questions.

Interview questions related to teacher interviews (Appendix J) are aimed at collecting data that cover their experiences and qualifications; students and their needs; negative effects and student discipline; curriculum and examination design; PD; accreditation; and parents’
attitudes. The teachers’ interviews aim to address teacher perspectives about teaching and learning in international schools. In addition, the teachers will share their perspectives about most of the research areas that are related to the remaining sub-questions.

Interview questions related to principal interviews (Appendix J) are aimed at collecting data that cover their qualifications and experiences; size of the high school department; parents’ choice of this school and their attitude to education; school’s educational policy; designing the curriculum; teachers’ employment and PD; student assessment (local and international); and accreditation. Principal interviews aim to address the principals’ perspectives about teaching and learning in international schools. In addition, the principals will give their perspectives about most of the research areas that are related to the remaining sub-questions.

Interview questions related to directors’ interviews (Appendix J) are aimed at collecting data that cover the parents’ choices of international schools; educational policy of the school; curriculum design; teacher employment, their PD program and evaluation; assessments and international exams; and accreditation and its importance.

The main points of discussion during the chairpersons’ interviews (Appendix J) are focused on the reasons for, and the history of, the establishment of their school; parent selection of their school; Ministry involvement school affairs and regulations; conditions set by the MOE to license international schools; school improvement; importance of accreditation for their school; employment and evaluation of superintendents and principals; and evaluation of the school’s performance. The chairpersons’ interviews aim to address the factors that caused and assisted the emergent and rapid growth of international schools in Kuwait. In addition, board members are asked to share their perspectives about most of the research areas related to the remaining sub-questions.

The need to interview school counsellors emerges from the fact that they are in a position to speak about general difficulties and problems, whether academic or social, that students may face in these schools. In addition, they play a major role in helping and organising
students to apply for university because they are knowledgeable and perceptive about patterns in student thinking when considering university studies within and outside Kuwait.

The counsellor interview questions (Appendix J) cover the following areas: students in this context and their needs; difficulties they face; handling of disciplinary issues; counsellor’s perspective on the curriculum from student feedback; student-teacher relationship; student attitudes toward assessment (local and international); PD programs offered for counsellors in the school; parents’ choice of this school and the concerns they have; future plans of students and whether they are theirs or their parents; and the accreditation process and its effect on the counsellor’s role and on learning in this school. Most areas of the research study will be covered here from a different perspective and experience.

Interview questions relating to the curriculum coordinators are aimed at collecting data relevant to most research areas from their perspective; they are involved in most education processes. These interview questions (Appendix J) cover the following: curriculum design and MOE role in this design; CIS guidelines regarding this design; curriculum and its suitability to culture and context; teacher involvement in designing the curriculum; parents’ suggestions regarding the curriculum; and assessments and tests incorporated in the curriculum.

Professional development coordinators are interviewed because their role is important and they can comment on the PD of staff. Therefore, it will be necessary to interview them and listen to their perspectives about PD programs; curriculum and its related PD programs; CIS guidelines regarding PD; MOE guidelines regarding PD; teacher involvement in choosing PD programs; new teachers and their needs for PD; and the budget for PD and its nature. Many research areas will be covered in this interview.

Regarding interviewing the accreditation coordinators, who work for international schools and are responsible for the organisation and follow up of accreditation issues, they aim to reveal the schools’ perspectives of the accreditation process and compare them to those of the CIS organisation. The interview will focus on the accreditation process and its
expenses; areas of focus by CIS; conditions set by CIS to approve school facilities; CIS guidelines regarding curriculum and school policy; CIS guidelines regarding teachers and principals; CIS guidelines regarding PD programs; and assessment and academic performance and how it can be monitored by CIS.

The interview (Appendix J) with the MOE official covers the rapid increase of international schools in Kuwait; international school issues that are regulated by the MOE; conditions set by the MOE to approve the curricula of these schools; teacher approval by the MOE; importance of accreditation of international schools; educational policies design by the MOE for these schools; assessment and academic performance in these schools; and complaints by parents regarding the quality of education in these schools. The MOE official’s interview aims to address the policy interventions that they took to develop strategies for delivering meaningful and sustainable educational monitoring policy for international schools in Kuwait.

Accreditation, a major component of this research, is explored during the interview that was conducted with the HOD at CIS. This interview covers the accreditation process and its purpose; rapid increase in the number of international schools in Kuwait; areas of focus during accreditation; guidelines regarding curriculum and educational policy set by CIS; issues regarding teachers and principals; and assessment and academic performance. The CIS director’s interview aims to address the practical steps and accountability procedures taken by international accreditation organisations to ensure quality teaching and academic performance in international schools in Kuwait.

4.7.2 Focus group interviews

The focus group interview method was chosen specifically to ask the students (17 to 18 years old) to share their learning experience in international bilingual schools in Kuwait. The aim is to encourage their participation in discussion with the interviewer and among themselves, and to elicit genuine, spontaneous opinions. The discussion is facilitated by asking a general question that will allow all participants to give their opinions freely while interacting with each other. Data collected in this way allows the analysis of more than one
participant at the same time. I also included in the data descriptions of group dynamics and analyses [that] should integrate the interaction dynamics within each group” (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 315), which will provide additional information about these students, their educational background and their character.

As mentioned earlier, four focus group interviews were conducted in this study, two of which were conducted with CIBS students because the school segregates male and female students and therefore it was not appropriate to interview them together. Each group consisted of seven to eight students. All focus group interviews, except the IBS focus group interview, were conducted in school locations during school hours. For the IBS focus group, it was conducted outside the school, because female students could not participate for cultural reasons. Each focus group interview was audio-recorded and lasted 55-65 minutes. Generally, students were friendly and responded actively to the questions. Interview questions (Appendix J) related to students are aimed at collecting data that covers their school experience, assessment (local and international), learning in English, preferred learning style, curriculum, future plans, suggestions for improving the school, and satisfaction with their school. The focus group interviews mainly aim to address student perspectives about teaching and learning in international schools. In addition, students gave their perspectives about most of the research areas related to the remaining sub-questions.

4.7.3 Crystallisation

“Crystallisation refers to the practice of ‘validating’ results by using multiple methods of data collection and analysis” (Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2009, p. 35). Richardson (2005) proposed that crystallisation should be used in qualitative research because he is asserting that “it provides us with a deepened, complex and thoroughly partial understanding of the topic” (Richardson, 1997, p. 92). Qualitative researchers achieve crystallisation by using different sources of data together, such as observation, interviews, texts and documents to connect various parts and piece them together as one (Stewart & Gapp, 2017). For example, Babcock (2015) used multiple methods in collecting his data. He used individual interviews, focus groups, blogs and researcher reflections in order to
include multiple genres, and connected them to reach the best answer to a research question. Multiple sources of data and evidence, according to Yin (2011), present the foundation for credibility and trustworthiness.

Indicated by credibility, the trustworthiness of findings is reflected in the crystallisation with many feasible perceptions reconstructed from the data. Creating trustworthiness and credibility through multiple views is not about validation but about creating an alternative that encompasses the depth, complexities and rigor sought for qualitative research. (Stewart & Gapp, 2017)

In this qualitative ethnographic interpretive research, various methods were used to increase credibility and trustworthiness of findings. The researcher used semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and researcher reflections (field notes) as part of crystallisation to form and reach the best answer of the research questions. Many data sources, including interviews with members of different interest groups representing students, parents, teachers, counsellors, curriculum coordinators, accreditation coordinators, PD coordinators, principals, directors (superintendents), chairpersons, a MOE official, and a CIS officer were also used to increase the credibility of this research. Additionally, the researcher used three case settings (bilingual international schools) to increase the extent of the breadth of this research since “qualitative research … acknowledges the existence of multiple views of equal validity” (Barbour, 2001, p. 1117). These different methods and data sources “allow(s) a research question to be examined from various angles” (Barbour, 2001, p. 1117).

With crystallisation, the researcher, in this research, through insider knowledge, field notes, interaction with the data collection from different resources, reflection, analysing and interpretation of the findings will try to construct and establish trustworthiness. “Whilst it is the aim of researchers to be trusted so as to produce the most reliable representation, unlike their quantitative counterparts that create repeatable generalisations, the qualitative researcher needs to demonstrate trustworthiness and credibility in their research” (Stewart & Gapp, 2017, p. 9).
Richardson (2000) argued that “it is more helpful to conceive of complementary rather than competing perspectives” (Barbour, 2001, p. 1117). Thus, the findings from these methods and resources in this research are going to be complementary to each other and will create a holistic picture of the stakeholders’ perspectives to produce a deeper understanding of the quality of international schools in Kuwait.

4.8 Data analysis and representation

Generally, the process of data analysis in qualitative research starts with “preparing and organising the data … for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion” (Creswell, 2007, p. 148). For ethnographic research, data analysis procedures are similar but there would be more focus on “three aspects of data analysis … description, analysis, and interpretation of the culture-sharing group” (Creswell, 2007, p. 150). The qualitative data analysis process begins when the researcher starts planning the data collection, contacting informants and site gatekeepers, contacting interviewees and arranging interviews, the interviewing process, observing, organising data, coding and analysing the results, and finally representing the findings and its discussion. Therefore, “Qualitative data analysis is an iterative and reflexive process that begins as data are being collected rather than after data collection has ceased” (Schutt, 2009, p. 322).

As an ethnographer, I will try to understand and describe in detail the complex situation of the quality of international schools in Kuwait. This will be possible because I am “fluent in the local language and spend enough time in the setting to know how people live, what they say about themselves and what they actually do, and what they value” (Armstrong, 2008, p. 55).

In addition to being an ‘insider’, I started taking field notes on the first day of contacting the MOE when I applied for a permission letter to conduct my research in three international schools in this study: CBS, CIBS and IBS. The field notes covers all processes relevant to conducting the data collection in Kuwait, which included MOE visits, school
visits and interviews, as well as contacting and meeting informants and gatekeepers of the schools. There were 65 field notes written over the seven month period of my data collection in Kuwait. An example of these field notes is one is related to the interview with the CBS chairperson:

This interviewee is American who is married to a Kuwaiti and been living in Kuwait for long time. She is well educated as she is associate professor Kuwait University. She is involved with the school for long time as all her kids were or still studying in the school. She is not of the owners and doesn't have any shares in this school, which owned by one owner, but she was appointed as a board member by the owner first and then she was elected by the other board members. The interview was arranged by contacting her through the email and we agreed to meet in her office at the science college in Kuwait University. It was very important talking to her because of her position and also due to her experience in this field especially in such a well-known reputable school. The interview was not so long (30 minutes) but her answers were precise and direct to the point. I was satisfied with her brief answers. She focused in her answers on the importance of the bilingual education, history of the school, specific school atmosphere, and the future plans to improve the school.

Field notes are valuable to my research as I expect to refer to them at many stages of the data collection and analysis. For example, they aid me in planning and conducting other interviews and also in the interpretation of research data during the data analysis. “These notes often form the backbone in the analysis of ethnographic data. The field notes may take many forms, including detailed observations and general interpretations, reflections, and summaries of recorded interviews” (Suter, 2012, p. 368). As an ethnographer, the field notes, in addition to interviews and previous experience and knowledge of the setting, will enable me to “provide rich, holistic insights into people’s views and actions, as well as the nature … of the location they inhabit” (Reeves et al., 2008, p. 512). This will enhance the quality of the data collection and analysis, as well as “provide a detailed or ‘thick description’ of the research setting and its participants” (Reeves et al., 2008, p. 513).

In this ethnographic data analysis, I use an inductive thematic manner in which I identify codes, categories, patterns and relationships that are expected to emerge from the data provided by the participants and their perceptions in their settings. “Anthropologists term
this an emic focus, which means representing the setting in terms of the participants and their viewpoint, rather than an etic focus, in which the setting and its participants are represented in terms that the researcher brings to the study” (Schutt, 2009, p. 322). On the other hand, as an ethnographic researcher, I include my insights and reflections, experienced at all stages of the analytic process, and also the impact on research plans and the research setting (Schutt, 2009).

4.8.1 Data management

Data management is the first stage of the data analysis process. I organised my data into computer files using the Word program. But first, I transcribed the interviews using an audio digital application program, which assisted in playing and controlling the speed of the recorded material. Some interviews were conducted in Arabic, so I translated them into English during the transcribing process. This translation is accurate and a true representation of the Arabic version as I am a qualified English to Arabic and Arabic to English translator. It took a long time to transcribe and translate all the interviews but this process resulted in a deeper knowledge of the data. These data files were stored digitally so they could be easily located and accessed. The NVivo qualitative computer program was used to manage and analyse my data. This program has many advantages in sorting data. It allows easy access to codes, close inspection of data, visual modelling of the relationship among codes and themes, and easy retrieval of memos associated with codes, themes or documents (Creswell, 2007).

4.8.2 Coding and categorising

After organising the data, I read the transcripts and field notes several times to develop a sense of the complete interview and grasp the main concepts of the text. Transcribing data and scanning over them repeatedly will enable me to identify more ideas to organise and form initial categories (or coding).
Figure 4.1  Example of a NVivo framework matrix analysis
Then, I will begin the coding process by using a ‘Framework Matrices’ approach in the NVivo computer program. This approach was effective in my analysis, especially when comparing interviews from the same category of participants in the three schools. For example, with academic counsellors from the three schools in the same matrix simplified the process of summarising and analysing data across the three cases, as shown in the example (image taken from NVivo analysis) below, which represents the framework matrix of academic counsellors.

Table 4.3 presents a simplified counsellor framework matrix.

**Table 4.3 Coding process of the counsellor category**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Initial code</th>
<th>Summary of coding text</th>
<th>Excerpts from the transcribed interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBS counsellor</td>
<td>Accreditation</td>
<td>Accreditation does not affect the role of the counsellor but if the internal committee needs any report or document, he provides it to them.</td>
<td>Mousa: For me it does not really affect my role, we are going through accreditation right now, there is a committee that is doing the accreditation and they go through the process, you know I help out in any way I can, you know, if they need any kind of written report that I have done about any previous graduating classes, I give those.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIBS counsellor</td>
<td>Accreditation</td>
<td>There was no effect, as a result of accreditation, on her job or role as a counsellor, but she noticed positive changes in teaching and learning.</td>
<td>I: Did the accreditation have any effect on your role as a counsellor and in what way? Lama: Not really, I didn’t feel or have any change to my job or role as a counsellor. I: What about learning? did accreditation, from your involvement with the students, have an effect on the students’ learning? Lama: Yes, I noticed some changes and I felt that the teaching ways were changed positively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBS counsellor</td>
<td>Accreditation</td>
<td>The accreditation helped to keep the school in order. It gave the counselling department a perspective and benefitted it positively.</td>
<td>Anne: Well, accreditation has helped us to keep our house in order. It made us think about a lot of things we don’t have and the challenge now is to maintain what has been set up in the months and years that led us to get accreditation and it’s been very valuable for us having people from outside coming and asking questions and giving input. You know, for me, it’s been a great value. I had a number of interviews when they came here last time. It gave us perspective and also benefitted our department positively.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This framework allowed me to code, summarise and analyse my data by case and theme in the same matrix. It is a comprehensive analysis method and flexible to necessitate adjustments. Each category of participants, for example, parents and students, is analysed in one framework matrix so comparison between their perspectives can be performed easily. There were 12 framework matrices in my analysis with each category included separately. In these framework matrices, there were many initial (tentative) codes due to variety in the number of participant categories, length of database and complexity of this study. All these codes were initiated and emerged to reflect the participants’ views and describe information. I avoided using ‘prefigured’ codes or categories, which were taken from the literature or a theoretical model, because they “serve (to) limit the analysis” (Creswell, 2007, p. 152). After that, I classified these codes and looked for the main themes that were manageable to write the final narrative and answer the research questions. Table 4.4 shows the main five themes that are emerged from reducing and combining the codes.

4.8.3 Interpretation

After developing the themes and categories, the next step was to draft the analysis chapters and interpret the data to make sense and meaning of what occurs in international schools in Kuwait. The analysis is divided into three chapters, followed by a final discussion chapter to include the findings resultant from the analysis of the three schools (case studies). Each school is analysed incorporating the same themes and categories because they share the same conditions: Kuwaiti culture, curriculum, accreditation agency, students’ background, similar environment and regulations. At the start of each case study, I described the context and situation of the school in detail because describing the culture of a school plays a central role in ethnographic studies, as Wolcott (1996, p. 28) pointed out:

Description is the foundation upon which qualitative research is built … Here you become the storyteller, inviting the reader to see through your eyes what you have seen … Start by presenting a straightforward description of the setting and events. No footnotes, no intrusive analysis – just the facts, carefully presented and interestingly related at an appropriate level of detail.
Table 4.4  Themes and their categories in this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>History and Rapid Growth</th>
<th>Parents’ Choice and Satisfaction</th>
<th>Curriculum and School System</th>
<th>National Educational Policies</th>
<th>Accreditation and Accountability Policies</th>
<th>Quality of Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• School information</td>
<td>• Parents’ choice</td>
<td>• Bilingual education</td>
<td>• Curriculum and ministry policies</td>
<td>• Accreditation importance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Choice reasons</td>
<td>• Satisfaction</td>
<td>• Curriculum</td>
<td>• Teacher qualification requirements</td>
<td>• Accreditation process and its efficiency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Profit orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Curriculum and national education policies</td>
<td>• Monitoring academic performance</td>
<td>• Accreditation effect on curriculum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Culture and identity</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Curriculum and accreditation</td>
<td>• Government scholarships</td>
<td>• Accreditation effect on assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• University studies</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Curriculum and teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Accreditation effect on teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Curriculum in the eyes of students and parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality of Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Student behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Staff qualifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Professional development programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Quality drivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Academic achievement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the case of these three schools, their stories of establishment will be mentioned because this is not only related to the first research question but also the knowledge of how school establishment is connected to other parts of the research study, as explained in the analysis chapters. Therefore, the reader may find it more meaningful to start with each school’s background. “Identifying and refining important concepts is a key part of the iterative process of qualitative research” (Schutt, 2009, p. 328). This is a major step in the analysis as “examining relationships is the centrepiece of the analytic process because it allows the researcher to move from simple description of the people and settings to explanations of why things happened as they did with those people in that setting” (Schutt, 2009, p. 329).

In this manner of analysis, as an ethnographer researcher, I will not apply “standard procedures that are specified before investigation begins” (Schutt, 2009, p. 332) but will develop my own method in this investigation. “Such a ‘natural history’ of the development of the evidence enables others to evaluate the findings and reflects the interpretivist philosophy (which involves researchers to interpret elements of the study) that guides many qualitative researchers” (Schutt, 2009, p. 333). During data analysis and discussion, my interpretation, due to my experience and knowledge of the context, culture and settings of the schools, will involve a great deal of comparative interpretations and critical connections between the findings that “raise doubts or questions to the reader” (Creswell, 2007, p. 162). This style of interpretation corresponds to “making an ethnographic interpretation of the culture-sharing group” (Creswell, 2007, p. 162). This “is a data transformation step as well. Here the researcher goes beyond the data base and probes … The researcher draws inferences from the data or turns to theory to provide structure for his or her interpretations” (Creswell, 2007, p. 162).

4.8.4 Presentation

The final phase of data analysis will be the presentation of the findings (results) of the analysis, followed by a discussion in a narrative form to provide a better understanding of participants’ viewpoints about the quality of international schools in Kuwait. The findings will be supported with evidence in the form of quotes from the comments and perspectives
of the participants. Theories of cosmopolitanism, neoliberalism and quality of education will be used to provide structure for my interpretations.

4.9 Ethical issues and considerations

Before conducting this research and starting collecting my data, ethical clearance from the Human Research Ethics Committee at Western Sydney University (Appendix A) was granted to me. Ethics approval is an important step in research to avoid any misconduct while conducting the study. Ensuring the safety and rights of the research participants is a priority in the ethics approval application. Applying for ethical approval was a rich experience for me as a researcher because it prepared me to take many ethical research issues into consideration and to follow the correct procedures during the research study. Furthermore, it added reliability and importance to the research.

According to Creswell (2007), “a qualitative researcher faces many ethical issues that surface during data collection in the field and in analysis and dissemination of qualitative reports” (p. 141). It was a sensitive situation for me as a researcher when interviewing, analysing and reporting the findings due to the nature of the research, which deals with the quality of education in the schools in this study. For example, the directors of CBS and IBS reacted negatively when I initially approached them to allow me to conduct the interviews at their schools because of the nature of such research, that is, investigating the quality of education in their schools. Therefore, I had to deal with this issue by explaining to both administrations how their feedback and anonymity would be protected, and access to their information would not be made available to anyone except the researcher. It took me some time to complete my interviews at IBS due to this issue and strong objection by the previous director for me to meet with the participants. But ethically, I had to follow the proper channel, therefore, contacted the IBS chairperson and the new director, whom I interviewed, and they welcomed me to continue the research and complete the interviews.

Lipson (1994, as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 141) categorised “ethical issues into informed consent procedures; deception or covert activities; confidentiality toward participants,
sponsors, and colleagues; benefits of research to participants over risks; and participant requests that go beyond social norms”. In relation to ethical procedures, my first step was to apply to the MOE to issue a permission letter to allow me to conduct the research in the context of international schools in Kuwait. I made contact with many departments at the MOE and in different places, and followed up at different levels, a process which took one month until I was able to receive the permission letter. It was necessary to have this letter because it facilitated my access to the international schools under study. The next step was to approach the three schools, CIBS, CBS and IBS, and ask them to grant me access to their schools so that I could invite potential participants. I provided the administration of these schools with an information sheet about the research and copies of the interview questions so they would have a clear idea about my role as a researcher and for them to feel comfortable about the nature of the research.

After receiving approval from each school’s administration, I initiated the interview process and began collecting data from participants. Before commencing every interview, I gave each participant a copy of the research information sheet in both languages, Arabic and English, allowed them enough time to read it and raise concerns, if necessary. After reading the information sheet, each participant was asked to sign a consent sheet, which protects both the participant and researcher. It informs the participants that they are being researched voluntarily and they can withdraw at any time if they so wish. In this way, the researcher avoided any misconduct or misunderstanding during the interview process. Participants under the age of 18 were given two informed consent sheets: (i) one to be signed by them; and (ii) another to be signed by their parents or caregivers.

Generally, the information and informed consent sheets provide details regarding the research information and its purpose, identification of the researcher, identification of the sponsoring institution, benefits and time required for participating, participating requirements, notes about possible risks to the participant (if any); guarantee of confidentiality of participants, participant’s right to withdraw at any time and names and contact details of people to contact if questions arise or if making a complaint.
Anonymity and confidentiality of schools and participants were utilised from the beginning of the research study and in all chapters of this study. This will continue in any published reports or studies generated from this data. Pseudonyms were used for the schools’ names and participants in any written document, including transcriptions, analysis, findings and discussion. Additionally, identities, names and data will be kept secure and confidential, to be accessed only by the researcher.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter presents the philosophical assumptions, social constructivism paradigm, interpretive position, theoretical perspective and research methodology that shaped this qualitative research project. These elements direct the researcher in addressing the research questions, conducting the data collection methods, analysing the data and presenting the findings. This is a complex situation requiring interviews with up to 12 categories of participants and the interpretation of their perceptions about an important sensitive area, namely, the quality of education in bilingual international schools in Kuwait.

Chapter Five analyses the data collected from CBS, Chapter Six analyses data collected from CIBS, Chapter Seven analyses data collected from IBS, and Chapter Eight presents the findings following an analysis of Chapters Five, Six and Seven, and discusses them in relation to theories of cosmopolitanism neoliberalism and education quality assurance concepts.
Chapter Five: Case Study – Community Bilingual School (CBS)

5.1 Introduction

Chapters Five, Six and Seven cover the following three case studies respectively: (i) Community Bilingual School (CBS); (ii) Cultural Identity Bilingual School (CIBS); and (iii) Inclusion Bilingual School (IBS). As mentioned in Chapter Four Section 4.7.2, six core themes are constructed to identify the experience and perspectives of the key participants in the international school system in Kuwait: (i) history and rapid growth; (ii) parents’ choice and satisfaction; (iii) curriculum and school system; (iv) national educational policies; (v) accreditation and accountability policies; and (vi) quality of education. These themes are organised around a chronological structure (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2014) to fully explain relevant details of international schools in Kuwait. As explained in Chapter Four Section 4.7.2, these themes are the focus of the analysis process since starting the coding process and are organised in order to answer the research questions. Although each case study is organised in a similar way to facilitate comparison and cross analysis, the content in each theme differs. Each case study (school) has a unique story to tell, including various circumstances and elements. Each theme has a range of interdependent categories to provide clarification. Evidence for each theme is supported by diverse points of view of 12 participants involved in international schools in Kuwait. As can be seen in the research questions below, the first theme relates to the history and rapid increase in the number of international schools in Kuwait, and aids in answering the first research sub-question.

The principal research question is:

What priorities govern the development of international schools in Kuwait?

Supporting sub-questions

1. What core factors contributed to the emergence and rapid growth of international schools in Kuwait?
2. Why do some Kuwaiti parents choose international schools for their children? To what extent do their experiences meet their expectations?

3. How do considerations around international accreditation influence the organisation and practice of international schools in Kuwait?

4. How do international schools respond to requirements from official bodies, such as the Kuwaiti Ministry of Education (MOE) and demands for ‘quality education’ in international schools in Kuwait?

The second theme, relating to parents’ choice of international schools in general and of one specific school for their children, directly answers the second research sub-question. The third theme is about the curriculum of these schools, which is a very important area in this research because it is not only relevant to all research questions but is considered the backbone of any school, international or otherwise, and relates to all research questions. The fourth theme, which is the national educational policy of Kuwait, aids in answering the fourth supporting research question. The fifth theme, relating to procedures of the accreditation organisation and its accountability policies, is a direct answer to the third supporting research question. The sixth theme relates to the quality of education in these schools, which is considered the basis of this research and is conclusive due to its relevance to all operations of international schools in the study. This theme aids in answering the third and fourth research supporting questions. Table 5.1 shows the themes and their categories resulting from analysing data collected in this study.

The aim of Chapter Five is to analyse and interpret the experiences and points of view of the participants involved in the CBS, that is, three parents, eight students, three teachers, one counsellor, two coordinators (curriculum, accreditation and PD), one principal, one superintendent (or director) and the Head of the Board. Firstly, a brief description of the school’s history, background and context is given in order to illustrate the impact and effect they have on education in the school. Secondly, each of the seven themes is discussed, and meaning is established, according to data gathered from participants.
Table 5.1  Themes and categories studied

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>History and Rapid Growth</th>
<th>Parents’ Choice and Satisfaction</th>
<th>Curriculum and School System</th>
<th>National Educational Policies</th>
<th>Accreditation and Accountability Policies</th>
<th>Quality of Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• School information</td>
<td>• Parents’ choice</td>
<td>• Bilingual education</td>
<td>• Accreditation importance</td>
<td>• Students’ behaviour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Choice reasons</td>
<td>• Satisfaction</td>
<td>• Curriculum</td>
<td>• Accreditation process</td>
<td>• Teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Profit orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Curriculum policies</td>
<td>and its efficiency</td>
<td>• Administration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Culture and identity</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Curriculum and national</td>
<td>• Accreditation effect</td>
<td>• Management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• University studies</td>
<td></td>
<td>education policies</td>
<td>on curriculum</td>
<td>• Staff qualifications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Curriculum and accreditation</td>
<td>• Accreditation effect</td>
<td>• Professional development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Curriculum and teachers</td>
<td>on assessment</td>
<td>programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Curriculum in the eyes of</td>
<td>• Accreditation effect</td>
<td>• Quality drivers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>students and parents</td>
<td>on teachers</td>
<td>• Academic achievement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


A brief summary is mentioned at the end of each section, describing the connection of cosmopolitanism and neoliberalism theoretical frameworks and quality assurance conceptual perspective to relevant themes.

Of 20 participants consisting of 12 males and eight females who were interviewed at CBS, eight students (five males and three females) participated in a focus group interview, and the remaining 12 participants (seven males and five females) were interviewed individually. Tables 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 show details of the participants at CBS. All names of schools and interviewees are pseudonyms.

Table 5.2 CBS Participant Classification Sheet – Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff Name</th>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Native Speaker of English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Head of English Department</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Master degree</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannon</td>
<td>Grade 12 English teacher</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Graduate Diploma of Education</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murad</td>
<td>High school Physics teacher</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Egyptian</td>
<td>Bachelor of Physics and Master of Education</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mousa</td>
<td>High school counsellor</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Counsellor qualification</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lina</td>
<td>Professional Development coordinator</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Master degree</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caith</td>
<td>Curriculum and Accreditation coordinator</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Master of Education</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalal</td>
<td>High school principal</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Palestinian</td>
<td>American degrees in teaching and principal certificate</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>Doctorate degree</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Chairperson and a university professor in science</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Postgraduate Diploma</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 5.3 CBS Participant Classification Sheet – Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent name</th>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maram</td>
<td>Registration manager at CBS</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Canadian of Palestinian background</td>
<td>Bachelor degree</td>
<td>Educated mother working in the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazen</td>
<td>University lecturer</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>Postgraduate Diploma (USA)</td>
<td>Educated father with a PhD degree and an active member of the school community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasem</td>
<td>Finance and investment manager</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>Bachelor of Engineering and Master of Business Administration</td>
<td>Has an MBA and used to be the manager of one of the well-known investment company in Kuwait.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 5.4 CBS Participant Classification Sheet – Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taleb</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayman</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dana</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Lebanese</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gyda</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorour</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lubna</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaser</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aabdullah</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.2 School profile

Table 5.5 shows CBS school information as displayed on the school website and according to the participants’ answers.
### Table 5.5  CBS school information on wesite

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum and School System</th>
<th>Bilingual School: Local Arabic Curriculum for Arabic subjects and American/Canadian Curriculum (American curriculum for English Art subject and Canadian curriculum for English science subjects).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>Owned by a well-known family in Kuwait; non-profit school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ Background</td>
<td>Majority (more than 95%) well-educated Kuwaitis from wealthy families as provided by the participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Number</td>
<td>Around 360 staff members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ Number</td>
<td>Around 2200 students from K-12, including males and females taught together in the same class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ Nationalities</td>
<td>English Curriculum Subjects: native English speakers from Western (American, Canadian, Australian) countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arabic Curriculum Subjects: native Arabic speakers from Arabic countries with a significant proportion of them being Palestinians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ Qualifications</td>
<td>Majority well-qualified, especially the English subject teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration Qualifications</td>
<td>Majority from Western countries with higher degree qualifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation</td>
<td>Accredited by many international accreditation organisations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.2.1 Location

Most Kuwaiti international schools were relocated after the Gulf War in 1990 because of the availability of many vacated government schools as a result of the sudden departure of non-Kuwaiti students (especially Palestinians) who exceeded Kuwaiti students in number. It was convenient for international schools to rent these spacious, fully-equipped, reasonably-priced school premises located in the centre of well-established suburbs. CBS was one such international school, renting a disused government school located in the most populated area in Kuwait. Management gradually renovated the school and added modern facilities to enable it to function.

### 5.2.2 Context of school

Despite its location in a crowded busy area, a high percentage of students are from wealthy, well-educated Kuwaiti families. Kuwait is a small country, therefore, its suburbs are relatively close to each other. Traffic permitting, it does not take long to commute in most cities. Thus, a school not being situated in a local area is generally not an issue for parents.
of students, particularly at CBS because most Kuwaitis employ personal drivers to take their children to school.

5.2.3 History and establishment

The school was founded by a woman from a prominent, wealthy Kuwaiti family with a reputation for valuing education and learning. One of the parents interviewed, Mazen, confirmed this, “The founder of this school, my father was a close friend to this family, a well-known family in Kuwait, and I know very well their value for education.” The founder was well-educated and wished to establish a school that provided a high quality of international education whilst protecting Arabic identity and cultural values. When this idea was first debated, she was supported by 14 women who were also from families that could provide the necessary resources for the school.

As shown in Table 5.5, the school was established in 1978 and it was the first bilingual school in Kuwait and the Gulf region. Establishing a new category of school at that time was undoubtedly a courageous and creative step because 20 years passed before other bilingual schools opened in Kuwait. When the owner passed away nine years after establishing the school, her husband and children continued to lead and improve the school in accordance with the founder’s wishes, that is, to remain as a non-profit, bilingual international school that competes internationally to provide a high standard of quality education. This school was the first in Kuwait to be awarded accreditation certificates by international agencies, as explained by the chairperson:

We are the only school in Kuwait (that has accreditation from) the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, which is the oldest accredited agency in the US. They used to be totally separate accreditation teams: one from the New England and one from the Council of International Schools (CIS), but now they joined together. We are one of the first or (possibly) the first school to have accreditation in Kuwait.
5.2.4 Demographics of student and family backgrounds

The school teaches students from pre-nursery to Grade 12. In 2014, around 2200 students were enrolled, a time when data collection place for this study. As mentioned earlier, the majority of students (over 95%) in this school are from well-known, well-educated families, considered upper class Kuwaitis. They view the school as part of their community, as parent Jasem stated, “The main reason that I chose this school is my community and friends because most of them send their kids to this school.” The head of the board shared this idea:

I think there is also a good proportion of the families or the parents (who) put their kids in the school because … they have family ties to the school. We see now more and more alumni putting their children in the school, so there is a sense of community with our school.

Student minority groups consist of many nationalities, of which a large proportion are children of parents who work at the school. The parents are actively involved with the school as they closely observe all activities on a daily basis, supporting the school in diverse ways. Jasem commented on this issue:

I am in the school on a daily basis and that gives me a lot of insight into what’s happening in the school, like concerns being raised by parents, by teachers and normally I am on top of everything happening in the school.

This involvement is possibly one reason why the owner appointed parents as board members, including the Head of the Board. This situation is unique to schools in Kuwait and it is evidence that CBS values parental involvement and organisational transparency.

5.2.5 Description of CBS premises and classes

CBS consists of two buildings situated approximately 10 minutes apart by car. One building accommodates pre-nursery and nursery, while stages K-12 are located in the main building, which is a large campus with multi-storey buildings. Each stage or division (Kindergarten 1 and 2, elementary school, middle school, and high school) has different
buildings and separate administration. As it was previously a public school, both buildings were renovated and necessary facilities were installed to meet the standard of a well-equipped international school. The chairperson, Mary, explained, “We rebuilt the school campus and totally renovated (it) and finished that (project) four years ago.”

5.2.6 Staff and teachers

CBS has about 260 staff members, including teachers. Most staff members are well-qualified and experienced. Most of the academic administrators (superintendent and principals) are native speakers of Arabic with higher degree qualifications from Western countries. Most teachers of English subjects are well-qualified, experienced and also native speakers as confirmed by HSP Jalal:

School teachers have to be specialised in the areas they are going to teach and not (just) general education. They need to have a degree in chemistry or physics if they (teach) in this area. We prefer to have teachers with experience, we do interviews and we check references when we ask for them.

Sections 5.3 to 5.8 describe the research findings in the CBS, based on six themes that emerged in this case analysis: (i) history and rapid growth; (ii) parents’ choice and satisfaction; (iii) curriculum and school system; (iv) national educational policies; (v) accreditation and its policies; and (vi) quality of education.

5.3 History and rapid growth

This theme directly answers the first research supporting question by clarifying specific reasons behind the rapid growth of bilingual international schools in Kuwait and highlighting certain facts about the history of international schools in Kuwait. History and rapid growth are connected because the factors and reasons for establishing such schools are part of their history, providing important facts and realities. As a result of analysing the data, five categories constitute this theme: (i) history and school information; (ii) choice reasons; (iii) profit-orientation; (iv) culture and identity; and (v) university studies and future plans.
5.3.1 History and school information

Information about the history of CBS was attained by asking the chairperson, superintendent and parents. The drive factor and vision for establishing CBS were summarised by the chairperson, Mary:

(As for) the history of the school, it was established … by a group of mothers looking for a school that suited what they wanted for their children. They really wanted a bilingual structure and (it) started as a very small school (but) it has grown now to over 2000 students.

The success of this school resulted in the establishment of other non-profit entities with the same goals of providing quality education and services, as Mary explained, “It is actually under the umbrella of a bigger company … which actually has three educational entities within its structure, all non-profit schools. This school (was the first) to be established.”

One important fact mentioned by the chairperson is that this is a non-profit school, a claim made by CBS with supporting evidence of appointing an independent governor with independent input into the governance of the school. It is managed by the community and people other than the owner or shareholders. The open communication about CBS finances by people other than the owner or shareholders is a rare situation in Kuwaiti schools; it gives insight into how the management of the school is diversified and have qualified parents involved. For example, the chairperson and many other board members are parents of students at the school, and the board effectively manages the school. Mary explained her knowledge of such financial school affairs:

The school sometimes achieves a capital gain (and has) capital investment programs. For example, (when we renovated) … four years ago, to help us with that process, we (had) a capital investment program where people could sponsor a classroom, a certain something within the school and then they would have (their) name on (it) … but that only covered a small portion of the actual cost and expenses.
This rare situation, as decided by the owner, gives full management of the school to qualified parents, which in turn leads to a strong element of its success in improving this school. Another parent Mazen, also a board member, confirmed this situation:

The whole project (the company that owns the school) was given to her son and daughter, and managed by the head company, which owns two other educational institutes and one health care institute. The board manages this school and the other special needs school. This project was the vision of the owner, may Allah have mercy on her soul, and the authority of management was given to the board. Today in this interview, I would be answering your questions as a parent but not as a board member.

The narrative of establishing CBS and the collective responsibility taken for management by parents and staff affected its whole system and considerable success was achieved from its inception to present day. Before CBS was established in 1978, approximately eight American and British international schools existed for enrolment by expatriate children living in Kuwait and a limited number of Kuwaiti students, mostly for reasons of culture and identity issues that related to non-segregation between male and female students and not teaching Arabic curriculum in these schools. Thus, bilingual education was introduced to Kuwait and the Gulf region by the owner of CBS as a solution to the perceived problem of a lack of effective international education that protects the local culture and identity of local students. Other schools eventually followed in increasing numbers as a result of the suitability of this system, the highly regarded reputation of this school and achievements of its graduates.

5.3.2 Choice reasons

Parents choosing bilingual international schools for their children is a main factor in the rapid growth of such schools in Kuwait. Therefore, investigating the reasons behind their choice is an important step towards understanding the proliferation of these schools in recent years.

The main participants to ask about this issue were the parents as they made the original choice. However, in addition to parents’ perspectives on their choice, the perspectives of
other participants required a platform as they either shared in this decision, students, or in the case of board members, the superintendent and principals; they were in direct contact with parents and had some awareness of the choices that parents made. Due to this, students, parents, the chairperson, superintendent, and the HSP were asked about the parents’ reasons for choosing CBS for their children.

Their perspectives were mostly similar and supported general observations of: bilingual education, English language, preparation for college abroad, weakness of education in government schools, local culture and identity, extra curricula activities, good reputation, developing personal skills, and the sense of community at the school.

Bilingual education was indicated by all participants as the main factor for choosing this school. Student participants were well aware of the value of the bilingual education they received at CBS and how other international schools, American or British, were lacking in this area. One student, Lubna, explained clearly, “I realised that our school not only focuses on English like other types of (international) schools, but we also study Arabic the same way they study (it) in government schools.” Lubna also highlighted the value of having well-developed English language skills by saying, “It prepares us for college because most college courses use English, but in government schools they take most (subjects) in Arabic, so I see being part of a private (international) school as an advantage over those government schools.” According to Lubna, studying in this school helps students to gain entry to universities in the USA and elsewhere. This opinion was shared by parent Jasem, who explained, “To prepare (students) to study outside Kuwait, they have to be exposed to international education.”

In addition to valuing bilingual education and the importance of English language in preparing students to study at Western universities, Mazen, said he asked many people about different international schools in Kuwait; this allowed him to conclude, “The reputation of this school was much better than other schools, especially (regarding) the successful achievements of its graduates.”
One factor that had a clear effect in facilitating the rules and regulations surrounding the establishment of international schools in Kuwait arose as a consequence of the first Gulf War, which caused Kuwaiti economy, health and education systems to collapse. Accordingly, because the public education system deteriorated, the MOE yielded to the pressure of parents and other parties to ease the regulations of establishing new international schools in Kuwait. One parent, Jasem, explained how the weak education in government schools resulted in a new situation, “The main asset of a quality school is the teachers. (People) noticed that most of the good quality teachers had moved from government to private schools, so this is what attracted us to the private schools.”

In addition to bilingual education, CBS HSP Jalal asserted that parents appreciate that the culture of this school is closer to local culture than that of Western schools. He explained, “When it comes to behaviour, yes, they do care in general and again one of the reasons (is that) we are conservative compared to other Western schools,” adding that this school was often specifically chosen because it is known for providing quality extracurricular activities, such as the MUN and robotics group.

According to the superintendent, Peter, another distinguishing factor that parents admire about CBS is its ‘family unit concept’ where many students are related to each other and many of the parents were previous students of the school. Regarding choosing this school, he said:

This is a unique school (for) two reasons. Number one is the recognition of being one of the best schools in Kuwait and the second is that this school has a sort of family unit concept to it. Many of the students are from large, well-known family tribes in Kuwait.

This is also mentioned by the chairperson, Mary. She explains that apart from bilingual education and quality of the English language, parents prefer CBS because they feel ‘a sense of community’ towards the school:

I think most of them want the bilingual system … that’s their aim … I think there is also a good proportion of the families or parents (who) put their kids
in the school because … they have family ties to the school. We see now more and more alumni putting their children in the school, so there is a sense of community with our school. I don’t know if it is stronger than other places or other schools … I can’t guess that.

5.3.3 Profit-orientation

To achieve profitability and deal with international schooling as a successful business is the most common aim for international schools in Kuwait, especially for the majority of schools that were established after the Gulf War. Although many schools claim to be a non-profit organisation, there is no transparency or evidence to these claims; to the contrary, low quality services and achievements were delivered. Due to substantial funds generated by most international schools, many businessmen began to establish international (bilingual) schools, aiming for that guaranteed profit. This was the key factor in the fast growth of such schools, resulting in 62 international schools opening up in 2014 in Kuwait.

Parent Jasem identified this issue when asked about the pressure put on the MOE by some Kuwaitis to facilitate the opening of new international schools:

Interviewer: It was mentioned to me that after the war finished, Kuwaitis put a kind of pressure on the government to facilitate allowing and increasing the international schools. Is this information accurate?

Jasem: Yes that’s right, there was a kind of a lobby, and it was the same thing for other sectors like private universities, hotels (and so on) … For a lot of people, it’s a business, it is profit for them, but this school is a non-profit school. Other schools are profit-orientation.

As mentioned previously and confirmed by Jasem above, CBS is not a profit-making school. There is transparency because the school is managed by a board comprising of many parents. This was assured by another parent, Mazen, a board member, who said, “The owner’s goal is not to achieve profit but to improve education. This was also one of the reasons I chose this school: the education values of the family who established this school.”
5.3.4 Culture and identity

Bilingual international schools appeared to be the preferred choice made for parents instead of American or British international schools because they cater for Arabic and English curricula, as well as providing a conservative atmosphere that is similar to the local culture, which is necessary for protecting Arab identity and values. All parents at CBS emphasised this opinion when discussing their choice. Parent Mazen, clearly stated that the Arabic language was an important factor when choosing CBS:

We believe that the Arabic language is the mother tongue and there is no future without the Arabic language, so I had a belief about the importance of the Arabic language as well as the English language, and this encouraged us, myself and my wife, to choose the bilingual education system.

Parent Jasem shared this opinion about the value of the Arabic language in addition to Islamic values:

There were not many options, especially as we care about the Arabic language and Islamic studies. When I was in London, my friends there were suffering because their kids who went to international schools, whether American or British, were lacking a lot in Arabic language and Islamic studies, so they used to bring private teachers to help them. So from this situation, I decided to look for a school that takes care of both languages.

5.3.5 University studies and future plans

This section explains how students perceive their future plans of what and where to study. These factors are incorporated in this theme because they have a direct effect on their parents’ decision of whether to send them to international schools, which leads parents to prepare and facilitate their entry into Western universities where a high command of the English language is required and quality international education is offered.

Many parents prefer their children (as well as the students themselves) to study in Western universities because they generally are of high repute, which helps graduates to establish a better career. In addition, the Kuwaiti government offers scholarships for Kuwaiti students
to study abroad in Western countries. This situation helps international schools to attract more students, therefore, contributing to their fast growth. Parents and students were asked about their future study plans; the majority emphasised the importance of the option to study in Western universities. In order to obtain an accurate estimate of the number of students who study in Western countries, I had to ask the chairperson and HSP, who are both briefed on this information, and most importantly, the academic counsellor, who is responsible for this data.

When the chairperson, Mary, was asked about where students enrolled for university degrees, she answered:

I think that before we had so many private universities in Kuwait, yes, at that time, one of the aims of a lot of parents (was for) their children to have a strong English … background, and be strong enough in English to cope (at) school in the US, the UK or wherever … I am not sure that’s the case anymore because with … opening so many universities within Kuwait, we’ve seen more and more of our graduates actually stay here in local universities. Having said that though, most of these universities are English based as well. So they have either US-based curricula, or … Australian, they are actually all English-based curricula, so still you need a strong base in English ability to function in English.

In contrast, HSP Jalal raised an important issue regarding the competition to gain the highest level of scholarship from the Kuwaiti government. He stated that studying in international schools such as CBS guaranteed being granted scholarships because CBS students achieved high scores in international standardised tests and were therefore accepted in the most reputable international universities, such as Harvard and Stanford. He continued to explain that their acceptance in these top universities qualifies them to win the merit scholarship from the MOE.

This opinion of high academic status was confirmed by the counsellor, Mousa, who appraised the school by stating, “Yes, absolutely! It is a fact that their kids (are) well-prepared to go into higher education in … Western universities, either it is Canada,
Australia, Europe or the US … kids (are) prepared better here than … in other schools.” He further explained:

About 97% of our kids will go to post-secondary education so about 80-90% of the 97% of students go to four-year colleges in the universities, four-year degree bachelor programs, and I would say about 5% would go to two-year community colleges … About 1-2% decide to take a semester or year off to figure out what they want to do in their life … We do what is in our mission statement: we prepare our kids to go to college … By the time they graduate, 97% of our students are in higher education institutes all around the world … I would say about 50% of the students go to the States, 40% stay in Kuwait and that varies from year to year … 5% go to the UK, 3% to Lebanon, and 1-2% to Canada or Australia.

Almost 60% of CBS students study abroad, mostly in Western universities; those who study in local private Western universities in Kuwait need a good level of English language skills if they are to achieve good results. Therefore, the role of international schools in preparing students to enter English language-based university study is becoming more vital.

5.3.6 International schools in Kuwait and neoliberalism

Neoliberal principles (Ball, 2012) regarding the privatisation of education and international schools allowed CBS to be established by a parent and supported by a group of women. However, the government of Kuwait, through the MOE, allowed Kuwaiti students to enrol in CBS and facilitated it by accepting such school systems and certifying their degrees. The MOE also rented vacant government school premises, which assisted in CBS expanding their educational services rapidly. Thus, the MOE acted as a facilitator for the education system of this school (Woo, 2013). In spite of being a non-for-profit school, as stated by many participants in this school, CBS is still part of the education services industry in Kuwait. In this sense, and according to neoliberalism understanding, CBS is considered an efficient commodity provided to suit consumer choice (Woo, 2013).
5.4 Parents’ choice and satisfaction

This theme was the focus while writing the interview questions and analysis to answer the second supporting research question, which is about discovering what motivates the parents to choose international (bilingual) schools for their children and whether they are satisfied with the overall outcome. It is important to understand the situation or reasoning that prompts large numbers of parents to choose schools that charge high fees instead of free public (government) schools, especially after the Gulf War. Parental choice had a major impact on the growth of international bilingual schools, which was set up to receive increasing numbers of students as most of them were established after the Gulf War.

Although CBS was established 12 years before the Gulf War, the school expanded considerably after the war when they moved to larger premises and enrolments increased remarkably. Three parents, eight high school students, and the HSP were asked about parents’ choices and expectations. Parents’ choice of CBS is analysed in Section 5.3.2, revealing that their reasons revolved around the low standard of education in government schools, value of bilingual education, good reputation of CBS, high level of English skills, preparing students for Western universities, and building their personal skills. Therefore, the focus of analysis in this section is on parent and student satisfaction in terms of their experience at CBS and whether their expectations were met.

5.4.1 Parents’ satisfaction

Parents and students interviewed were generally satisfied with their experiences at CBS and confirmed that the school met their expectations. However, some suggestions for improvement were submitted, but the overall attitude was clear approval. They expressed satisfaction on many issues regarding the quality of education at CBS. Some of these issues included personal skills gained at CBS, quality of teachers, education system structure, continuous improvement, facilities and safety, and strong bilingual education.
Parent Maram was very satisfied in spite of high school fees. She explained that not many can afford to pay exorbitant fees, especially non-Kuwaitis. To explain why this was problematic, she said:

> It is worth it because the school is very good … If you ask me about money; I don’t believe all the schools the same level (or lower than CBS) charge the same for tuition. I feel (the fees are) high … If I didn’t get 50% discount, I couldn’t survive … Not everyone can. This is another problem for admission here … not everyone can afford paying such tuition … We don’t have diversity because of this (reason).

Maram clarified that most of the profit is spent on school improvement and progress:

> (With) everything that CBS takes, they (make) changes. Building has cost millions, so I am sure they (make) some profits. I don’t know, I am not the finance manager, but really they do lots of changes, resources every year, technology costs a lot.

Parent Jasem admitted that high fees are an issue but justified here because of the high quality of education being offered. When asked about the cost of tuition, he commented, “Compared to other schools, it is not the highest (nor is it) low, but because of the quality of education we are getting, it’s worth it.”

While discussing about profit being reinvested into the school, it is worth mentioning the opinion of Sorour, a Grade 12 student. Regarding his experience with CBS education and facilities, he said, “I am really satisfied in CBS, not only with the education, but also the facilities and (level of) safety.”

For parent Mazen, the admirable personal skills and personality of his daughter were noticed by him and his family. He explained its importance:

> It is easy to differentiate between my daughter’s personal skills and her cousin’s due to the effect of the education process in both schools. I am not underestimating the education in government schools, but personality development is difficult to find in government schools.
In this context, ‘personality development’ means skills, such as public speaking, communication and debating, to name three.

Jaser, a Grade 12 student, also mentioned personal skills when describing how his debating skills improved by travelling with CBS to debate students in the USA:

Being in CBS (has) given me opportunities I don’t believe I would’ve (had) in another school … Like the extra curricula activities and facilities … For example, in Grade 9 for MUN we travelled to New York, Washington, and Baltimore. (People) from other schools were surprised by this.

The second parent Mazen explained that his satisfaction with CBS is due to his confidence in the quality of teachers employed by the school:

The most important (distinguishing factor of CBS) is the type of teachers they have, especially the local Arabic teachers and also the international teachers. There is a big investment in teachers … The quality of teachers is the most important factor in any education system, and I think this is one of the main factors for the success of (CBS) … This school is delivering what it is supposed to deliver.”

Taleb, a Grade 12 student, described a factor that was important to him, “There is a good college preparatory program at the high school.” Regarding the value of bilingual education, he said approvingly, “But at the same time there is also Arabic and it enforced Islamic studies and Quran (which) is more like at home I think.”

In addition to many examples of parent and student satisfaction, another important point of view was expressed by parent Mazen about certain elements existing in CBS, which, according to him, make it a successful school:

If you have a good education system with good quality teachers, administration, and facilities, it is easy to succeed with any curriculum or any kind of education adopted. (CBS) is very successful because they have all these features, enabling them to deliver the curriculum properly.
5.4.2 Parents’ choice and cosmopolitanism

The CBS parents, according to Weenink’s (2008), and concept of cosmopolitan capital are considered pragmatic cosmopolitans rather than dedicated cosmopolitans. CBS parents are prepared to invest in their children’s education, to build a confident personality with many skills to be prepared for attendance at Western universities and to guarantee better opportunities, locally and globally. Learning English was an essential factor for parents to choose CBS for their children and this is a typical feature of pragmatic cosmopolitans. However, those pragmatic cosmopolitan parents want to provide an international education for their children, as well as maintain their Arabic language and local identity. Therefore, they may also be described as partial cosmopolitans (Appiah, 2007).

5.5 Curriculum and the school system

This theme was focused on during interview and analysis processes because it is the backbone of any school. It is difficult to form a complete image of international schools in Kuwait without investigating the nature of curricula adopted by these schools, especially accredited international schools, because curriculum is the main element observed and evaluated by international accreditation agencies when assessing international schools. Although no direct supporting question is related to this theme, it is connected to all research questions because it covers all educational processes, whether inside the school, including teaching and learning, or outside educational processes, such as national educational policies and accreditation policies regarding the curricula of these schools. Therefore, it is important to identify and investigate the curricula of these schools in this study.

In order to depict curricula accurately, all participants involved in each international bilingual school were asked about their perspectives on curricula of their school. All participants gave thoughts about it, but the most detailed and thorough explanation was from the curriculum coordinator in each school.
In CBS, many categories and main points were raised due to the extensive nature of this theme, but it was possible to organise them into seven main categories relating to the research study: (i) curriculum; (ii) school system and bilingual education; (iii) accreditation; (iv) national educational policies; (v) teachers; (vi) students; and (vii) parents, to be analysed in the remaining two case studies as well.

5.5.1 School system and bilingual education

Bilingual education in international schools in Kuwait represents schools that teach all subjects, especially at the primary and middle school stages, in Arabic and English languages. That means they study Maths, Science, Music and Social Studies in both languages. In addition, they study Arabic, Islamic Studies, and English subjects. Therefore, bilingual international schools adopt two curricula: Arabic and English.

CBS was the first school to adopt a bilingual education system in Kuwait. Accordingly, it has gained a rich experience of implementing this system and achieving considerable progress compared to other bilingual schools that were established later. Parents put their children in CBS because of its ‘strong’ bilingual education system, as the chairperson, Mary, said:

(CBS) tries to be strong in two languages as we call it: the best of two worlds … The main goal of the school is always to have a very strong Arabic foundation and also give students a strong foundation in English … Many people, myself included, chose … that school because I wanted that strong Arabic foundation for my children.

Although students are happy to learn both languages, as confirmed by one student, Taleb, “CBS is good because it’s bilingual, there is a good amount of English,” the bilingual system is not a fully harmonious or compatible combination of Arabic and English programs in most bilingual international schools in Kuwait. This is because it is compulsory for all schools to adopt the national Arabic curriculum as explained by the superintendent, Peter:
The MOE (classifies) international schools as one of three: British curriculum, bilingual, or international curriculum/American. So as a bilingual school, the ministry (requires CBS to implement) the Arabic program without editorialising … We deal with that interference on a regular basis.

As a result, teaching and learning methods in Arabic subjects are traditional and mostly rely on memorising, which is not a method that is enjoyed or preferred by students when compared to the teaching and learning of English subjects. Students consistently criticised this Arabic learning tradition, as Gyda explained:

The reason why some people struggle more in Arabic than English is because (we are) kind of forced to learn English because the English curriculum is more (about) understanding than memorising, but in Arabic, we are … not pushed to the limit to completely understand the language. The day before the test, we memorise the book and we can get good grades. Yeah, we know Arabic but we don’t know it that well.

Furthermore, the focus of education in CBS is more on English subjects, especially at the high school level. Parent and board member Jasem explained:

(CBS) is called a bilingual school, but in reality it’s more inclined to be an international school. (The timetable) is supposed to be equally distributed between (Arabic) subjects and English subjects, meaning 50% to each, but in reality, it is 60% to English subjects and 40% to Arabic subjects.

Therefore, since the Arabic curriculum was forced on all schools by the MOE, there is limited space for CBS to make adaptations between English and Arabic curricula. In this analysis, the focus is on English subjects’ curricula due to the issues mentioned above and also, in the context of international schools and education, normally English subjects’ curricula is targeted for research and study.

5.5.2 Curriculum

5.5.2.1 Building the student’s personality

According to superintendent, Peter, the mission of CBS is to educate and prepare students for a “rapidly changing world”. He added, “The school has to be more direct in their
approach in terms of ensuring the students are critical thinkers and that they are collaborative as well as having good marks.” These ambitious goals do not seem difficult to achieve when listening to parent Jasem, also a board member, who described CBS students with admiration:

The school focuses on critical thinking and thinking outside-the-box. For example, sometimes the parents’ committee invites students to listen to their suggestions and questions, and we feel surprised as a committee because of the kind of questions they ask.

Parents consistently praised the CBS education system because of its positive effects on a student’s life skills and personality. Parent Mazen, who was proud and happy to invest in his daughter’s education, said, “The issue of building the personality is distinguished in such schools and this is my investment in my children.”

A third parent, Jasem, raised an issue that does not exist in most schools in Kuwait, namely, social awareness. He explained that CBS students become aware of their social environment because the education system and curriculum allows them to do so, “When (my children) sit with their … relatives, they don’t feel that their cousins have the (same) awareness about society and community …like what’s happening in the country and how can I contribute to this society. This is very important.”

5.5.2.2 Curriculum as benchmarks and standards

The CBS curriculum is written in the form of standards and benchmarks, and is available online using the online program mapping system. When explaining this system, which is not predominantly used by international schools in Kuwait, curriculum coordinator, Caith, said:

We (use) the Atlas Rubicon mapping system. It’s customised but we listen to their (teachers’) suggestions … They have their own standards, benchmarks and assessments, match questions and match marks. But we also have indirect understandings and central questions and I said those are the two most important things because they drive the direction of your content.
By using benchmarks and standards that are similar internationally, it was easy for the school to adopt any curriculum material that was suitable for their purpose. Caith explained, “Well-known, highly qualified people in the field of curricula and textbook companies (told me that) ‘standards and benchmarks are 99 % identical.’”

**5.5.2.3 Programs and elective subjects**

CBS uses language arts from Canada and the Common Core for maths and science and offers Advanced Placement (AP) programs for those wanting to take electives. This wide variety of programs and materials is not available in most international schools in Kuwait, therefore, CBS students have an advantage when applying for courses and universities. As a university preparatory school that offers extra curricula activities, electives and advanced subjects such as AP, CBS is valued by students and parents because these elements are important for a student’s future and career.

Jaser, a Grade 12 student, explained, “I feel we have a lot of opportunities, especially in a private school, and a large variety of extra curricula (activities) and electives that sometimes are not available in other schools.” He was proud of the CBS curriculum being similar to those in the USA because he could discuss his education with American students, especially regarding popular AP programs. He said:

> When I compare with people from other countries like the US … I feel our curriculum (at CBS) is specifically similar to the US … I can talk to them about APs … and they know exactly what I’m talking about, and we take the same test. AP exams (are) on the same date sometimes and we have a very similar curriculum.

Parents also value the wide range of curriculum options because it facilitates their children’s pathway to university. Parent Maram appreciated the availability of AP programs in CBS so that students can challenge themselves and improve. Regarding her daughter’s experience, Maram said, “These (advanced subjects or courses) are electives … not all students have to take them, but because she chose to challenge herself, she took AP subjects.”
5.5.2.4 Professional development and curriculum

One of the strengths of CBS appears to be its effective inclusive PD programs developed to prepare staff in delivering the curriculum. A key element of delivering curriculum successfully is to maintain close cooperation between the curriculum and PD coordinators as Lina, the PD coordinator, explained, “I worked closely with the curriculum coordinator, working hand-in-hand with curriculum and the needs; we survey our staff.”

Professional development programs at CBS are popular and sometimes attended by teachers from other international schools in Kuwait. Their effect in delivering the curriculum is especially apparent when compared to other international schools in Kuwait. Teacher, Murad, who currently teaches at CBS but previously taught at CIBS for many years, clearly identified the delivery of curriculum as the main reason behind competent English language skills of CBS students:

(They) are confident enough in their English language skills to participate in international debates like MUN. This competency in the English language stems from the care given to students since the beginning of their education at (CBS, where) they have the same curriculum as (CIBS) but the presentation and implementation is totally different and (more) effective.

5.5.2.5 Continuous revising and updating

From my observation during the interview process inside the school and after meeting with most people involved in education at CBS, I noticed a sense of commitment by staff, especially the coordinators and administrators, to improve the school in every way possible; the curriculum is the primary objective of that ambition. Therefore, CBS has a system in place whereby the curriculum is revised and updated every year, as described by the Head of the High School English Department, Sam:

We spent a long time in this school, more than any other school I’ve been in, working, revising, editing and updating and it’s in the school where the curriculum is a living, breathing document metaphorically. So every year this works we will keep it; this didn’t work let’s find something new.
Despite a process of revising and updating, the school management and administration are considering and actively searching to adopt a new curriculum to ensure that better results are achieved. Parent and board member Jasem stated, “Lately, people at this school started to question whether this (Canadian) curriculum is the most suitable or not … Should we go for the Scandinavian system, or the Singaporean system? This is a kind of healthy challenge for us.”

5.5.3 Curriculum and national educational policies

As mentioned earlier, the MOE enforces the national Arabic curriculum on all schools, whether public, private, Arabic or bilingual, and monitors its implementation to a certain extent. This was confirmed at CBS by parents, curriculum coordinator, HSP and superintendent. When parent Jasem was asked about the curriculum at CBS, he stated clearly, “The Arabic curriculum is imposed by the MOE.”

In contrast, the MOE has no regulations or policies regarding the curricula of English subjects taught in international schools in Kuwait, including bilingual schools, as confirmed by the curriculum coordinator, Caith:

The MOE doesn’t bother with the English language subjects, which includes science, math, English and any subject we teach in English. However, we use the ministry curricula for Arabic, social studies, Islamic studies and the inspectors come all the time to make sure we are following the ministry curriculum.

However, regarding the English curriculum, the MOE legislates the censorship of any written material that is perceived to be against the values and identity of the local society and culture. HSP Jalal commented on this issue when asked about MOE regulations of the English curriculum of CBS, “We do check the textbooks … We have a committee to check if there are any inappropriate sentences or pictures. The ministry has standards for these issues and we have to follow them.”

Kuwait’s national educational policies regarding international schools are not constructed to oversee this important, rapid growth sector in Kuwait, nor do they ensure the quality of
these schools, especially the adoption and implementation of curricula. All international schools are fully independent in this regard and generally have freedom to adopt any Western curriculum without being monitored by the MOE to follow up on curriculum implementation, a situation that has positive and negative implications.

A clearly positive example is CBS, which is a non-profit school that uses all necessary means and available resources to adopt the most suitable curriculum for students, and ensure it is implemented in the best way possible. As demonstrated in the other two study cases in this research, the situation can be entirely different. This issue will be discussed critically and in more depth in Chapter Six and Seven in order to point out serious issues resulting from a lack of educational policies concerning the curricula of international schools in Kuwait.

5.5.4 Curriculum and accreditation

Accreditation has had a major impact on improving and organising the curriculum of CBS in spite of the school’s good reputation since it was established. The curriculum coordinator, Caith, who joined CBS in its early years, stated clearly that the original curriculum was not implemented effectively:

We got slammed in the initial CIS report 15 years ago. They said, ‘You don’t have a curriculum, you run like a ship fair,’ because even if we have a curriculum, what happens is that people would say, ‘Oh yes, we have a curriculum,’ and they put it on the shelf and just do what they wanted. So we looked at that and said okay, we can’t be that kind of school.

Accordingly, the school started working closely with the accreditation agency CIS to develop a valid and suitable curriculum for CBS. CIS suggested many general guidelines for the school to follow, of which the primary guideline was to maintain a fundamental concept of focus for all stages and subjects throughout the school, as Caith explained:

They didn’t go so much by whose standards you had and what benchmarks you used, but they did want to make sure that you are aligning to something you are teaching for a reason. What is the big idea you were teaching to? What is the philosophical hook that you were using? They wanted to see that (ideas)
were spiralling what happened in the first grade with the spiral not just repeated but in spiral complexity and sophistication of concepts in processing certain skills in what we’re doing that goes all the way up.

CIS also focused on horizontal alignment in the curriculum, whereby all students from the same grade in a certain subject should possess the same foundation, skills and knowledge. She recalled her experience of explaining and directing this issue to teachers:

(CIS) wanted to look for, which is big one for them, horizontal alignment. So (if) six teachers are teaching the same subject, they wanted to make sure that the same content, skills and processes (are actually) learned. Although as I used to tell my staff, ‘You can work your magic in the classroom, you can do it in the way you wanted to do it and use the source you wanted to use’ but all the kids coming in that grade level in that subject should come out with the same foundation, skills and knowledge.

However, in the CIS Guidelines (latest version, 8th), vertical and horizontal alignment have been changed and reorganised under different categories. Caith explained, “CIS … didn’t look so much, they used to look at it but now they’ve changed. They have version eight for your accreditation and they just clump it under learning and teaching.”

Therefore, there is no doubt that CIS played an important role in curriculum development at CBS, a situation that is normal, especially when a school does not employ sufficiently qualified staff to run the school. However, questions are in section 5.7 about CIS guidelines and agendas that may not be suitable to function properly at some schools in certain contexts.

5.5.5 Curriculum and teachers

This section analyses the vital role and responsibilities of teachers regarding the curriculum. Teachers are the main implementers of the school curriculum and responsible for its delivery. Teachers prosper in an environment of professionalism at CBS, whereas teachers in the two other case studies are not as fortunate.
Newly-appointed teachers, especially in a new context and culture, must cope with the difficulties of implementing an original curriculum with unfamiliar students. HSP Jalal indicated the importance to all teachers to have a curriculum at CBS that is clear and easy to follow. He said, “It is very well-organised. When teachers join (CBS), everything is ready; the curriculum is ready, their schedule and what they are going to teach. We have a strong orientation program. Teachers don’t have to create their own things.”

Despite this, a teacher can change the materials to suit student needs but without changing the standards or benchmarks. The Head of the English Department, Sam, explained:

If a student says, ‘This book is boring …’ (and) if there is a book that I can get their attention with and still teach the curriculum, why not? I am not going to lower the standard … or the bar of their expectation, but if it is not working for a group of kids, then there are lots of novels out there that can touch on curriculum. So yes, I will accommodate my students but I will not change the curriculum … But a piece of literature, listen any teacher … can teach a standard from any piece of material if they are good in their teaching.

Thus, teachers are supported by the administration if they choose to adjust or replace teaching materials so that more productive learning can occur, confirmed by Sam:

We have the full support of the administration to say, ‘Okay, if a piece of literature is not working get rid of it and use another piece …’ We’re supported by administration to continue moving the students upward on the curriculum ladder based on where and what they know.

This issue was also confirmed by teacher, Murad, who compared the situation in CBS and CIBS. Valuing teacher independence at CBS, he said, “The HOD in CIBS controls everything and can change anything in your lesson plan, but this is not happening in CBS as the HOD doesn’t have the right to control and dictate what and how the teacher should teach.”

The teacher’s input and suggestions are taken into consideration at CBS, and the curriculum coordinator relies on their contribution to design and update the curriculum, as Caith mentioned in her interview:
We give the teachers as much input as we can. The higher up we go, the more we will rely on their input. They become experts in their subject area, so if we’re talking about AP physics, well then as curriculum coordinators, we’ll look at the standards and benchmarks but not so much the content because we don’t know. They know if it’s appropriate, by the time they are at the elementary level, we have a solid foundation there and if we have any questions, we go back to the teacher and say, ‘What do you mean by that?’ and they give us their input.

However, the teacher’s independence in implementing the curriculum does not mean that no supervision or monitoring is in place to ensure effective curriculum delivery. Caith clarified this in her interview:

We (said) to the principals, deputy principals and HODs, ‘You have to make sure – right from the HOD because they know what’s going on in that area – that they are doing what they say they are doing, and that they are addressing it, unless they don’t really understand what benchmarks they are addressing, but philosophical hooks, then it’s just delivering information, standard delivery in most places, so it has to be everybody checking that it’s getting implemented.

5.5.6 Curriculum in the eyes of students and parents

Although CBS students and parents interviewed in this study expressed positive opinions about the school curriculum, as mentioned previously, the curriculum coordinator, Caith, thought that students and parents generally prefer memorisation and factual information in order to score high grades and achieve a high grade point average (GPA) so that they can compete for high level government scholarships. She stated:

Most students, that’s sad to say, particularly in the high school, it might be because of the system here because everyone is trying for a scholarship, which is based on your GPA and it’s easier to get a higher GPA if it is straight memory and factual information and if it’s repeated you can always go to the book to memorise it.

Logically, students and parents aim for the best scholarships, which are awarded to students with the highest GPAs. Because CBS has a firm system of assessment and evaluation in comparison to other international schools in the competition for government scholarships,
CBS students have an advantage over others from schools with a simpler assessment system. To explain this issue in detail, the CBS academic counsellor said:

When (parents) transfer kids to … other schools, their GPA goes up … I transferred (struggling) kids to other schools … They had 1.6 here and (in the) other school they have 3.4 … If that’s what you want, please go! The problem stems deeper than the parents. It’s the Kuwaiti … ministry of higher education; they don’t care about the course work … (only) how high your GPA is. So (at) these schools (you can) get a 4.0 (by) taking classes like eye blinking and car washing or (at CBS you can) get 3.1, but actually you learned something (such as) how to (write) a paragraph (and) have an articulate conversation with an adult. (Ultimately), it depends on what you want for your child.

5.6 National educational policies

This theme has a central role in answering the fourth supporting research question because the national educational policies designed by the MOE supposedly play a major role in ensuring the quality of education in international schools in Kuwait remains high.

Despite being critically important to education in international schools in Kuwait, the following analysis (Sections 5.6.1 to 5.6.4) suggests that national educational policies received limited attention in the discussion. This is because they relate to international schools in Kuwait that are not comprehensive, so schools act independently when faced with major educational policies without accountability or evaluation.

Regarding CBS, after analysing data gathered from participants, the areas of curriculum, teacher qualifications, academic performance and government scholarships were found to be major categories to be discussed and analysed in relation to regulations and rules of Kuwait’s MOE.

5.6.1 Curriculum ministry policies

The MOE in Kuwait does not have specific policies regarding the curriculum of international schools in Kuwait, but bilingual international schools must teach the national Arabic curriculum. Nor does it have requirements regarding the curriculum of English
subjects taught in these schools, which was confirmed by the curriculum coordinator, HSP and superintendent at CBS. HSP Jalal stated:

> The MOE interferes only in general rules … in subjects like Arabic, Islamic studies, and Arabic social studies. They don’t interfere in … the Western curriculum. We choose our curriculum (and our) main objective is to be a college or university preparatory.

Even so, there is limited control over the delivery and assessment of the Arabic curriculum. CBS is responsible for yearly, monthly and weekly planning of MOE’s Arabic curriculum, as well as designing its assessment tasks.

The only MOE regulations covering the curriculum of English subjects in international schools are censorship guidelines related to the content of textbooks, which must be appropriate for the local culture and Islamic principles.

### 5.6.2 Teacher qualification requirements

In recent years, the MOE in Kuwait introduced regulations for the certification and qualification of teachers employed by international schools after several occurrences of unqualified Western people being employed as teachers. However, these regulations have become inflexible to the extent that some qualified teachers are prevented from teaching in Kuwait because their certificates are not specified on the MOE list of qualifications. Regarding this issue, the superintendent, Peter, commented, “We have to follow their rules. For example, in order to hire a Math teacher, they must have a degree in Mathematics, which is very limiting and unfortunate.”

Peter explained this problem by using the example of CBS previously seeking approval for one of its teacher’s qualifications:

> It is a very narrow definition of how to define a teacher. For example, they won’t certify a teacher for physical education if they have a degree in kinesiology because it doesn’t (match) the term they set, even though kinesiology is human body movement … Yet we have to fight to sort that out. So with all respect, they need to look at how to identify and certify teachers.
5.6.3 Monitoring academic performance

The MOE has no policy or system for monitoring the academic performance of students in Kuwait’s international schools. There are no standardised examinations or evaluation tools to ensure the quality of education in these schools. Each international school in Kuwait acts independently in all educational processes, including assessments and examinations. This situation is the same for the Ministry’s Arabic curriculum although it does request a copy of the end-of-semester Arabic exam. When asked if the MOE monitors assessment tasks and academic performances of students, the principal explained that the MOE requests to see the end-of-semester Arabic tests but it does not check the grades or distribution of the marks.

5.6.4 Government scholarships

The government of Kuwait provides many scholarships for study inside and outside Kuwait. Although students of Kuwaiti citizenship have a favourable chance of obtaining scholarships, their standard and quality is not uniform, hence, the level of competition for scholarships to reputable American and British universities. Many CBS students aim for scholarships, requiring them to work hard to improve their GPA as the curriculum coordinator, Caith, quoted in Section 5.5.6.

However, a dilemma exists because international schools have varying standards and there are no external examinations. Many international schools have a simple assessment system which allows their students to achieve a high GPA without working as diligently as CBS students. The counsellor of CBS, Mousa, clearly identified this ‘unbalanced’ situation between Kuwait’s international schools when he was quoted in Section 5.5.6.

Therefore, as Mousa explained previously, the problem lies with national educational policies where an academic performance monitoring system is not in place for these schools to ensure the quality of education and organise assessment tasks.
5.6.5 National educational policies and education quality assurance

It is the responsibility of the government through the MOE to manage and shape the education system, including international schools, in the Kuwaiti society (Woo, 2013). The MOE must act on behalf of Kuwaiti society to impose certain expectations that international schools must meet (Vanhoof & Van Petegem, 2007). The MOE has the responsibility of ensuring the quality of education in international schools by guaranteeing that these schools comply with parent and societal expectations (Harrington & Harrington, 1995). However, as can be seen in the analysis above, the MOE has no monitoring or accountability system in place to evaluate international schools in Kuwait because this responsibility was given to accreditation agencies such as CIS. This policy is strengthening the role of accreditation agencies in relation to international schools in Kuwait and accordingly, consolidating neoliberalism forces in Kuwait (Baltodano, 2012).

In the case of CBS, the limited role of the MOE in monitoring international schools in Kuwait did not, according to participant responses, affect its expected achievements; parents were satisfied with the level and quality of education in this school.

5.7 Accreditation and its policies

Accreditation by an international agency such as CIS is fundamental, as well as compulsory for international schools in Kuwait. It is important to allow international schools to become reputable and valued in the eyes of parents because most international schools in Kuwait are privately owned by individual businesspeople as opposed to well-known educational corporate entities that guarantee educational outcomes. Moreover, accreditation has been compulsory in Kuwait since the MOE introduced it after the rapid increase in numbers of international schools. There are several international accreditation agencies in the world accepted by the MOE, but CIS is the most popular.

This theme is a key element of this research, therefore, it is focused on during data collection and analysis to answer the third supporting research question. An accreditation agency is viewed as the body that can guarantee teaching quality and academic
performance in international schools, especially in Kuwait. Since the quality of education and academic performance are major issues in this research, this area of study is vital, not only for international schools in Kuwait, but also internationally.

In this research, all participants involved in the three bilingual international schools that are connected directly or indirectly to the accreditation process were asked about their perspectives of CIS accreditation issues. The participants included parents, teachers, accreditation coordinators, curriculum coordinators, PD coordinators, counsellors, principals, superintendents, a chairperson, MOE official, and CIS official. For the MOE and CIS officials, the information and perspectives they offered regarding accreditation are used in the cross-analysis in Chapter Eight because their input generally applies to all international schools in Kuwait and not specifically to schools in this study. As a result of data coding and analysis, five categories were organised to explain this theme and answer the third supporting research question: (i) accreditation importance; (ii) accreditation process and its efficiency; (iii) accreditation effect on curriculum; (iv) accreditation effect on assessment; and (v) accreditation effect on teachers.

5.7.1 Accreditation importance

CBS was one of the first international schools in Kuwait to be accredited internationally. With its long history of accreditation, CBS achieved a high status after completing the various stages for certification, which resulted in being accredited by two international agencies: CIS and NEASC.

HSP Jalal explained the importance of accreditation, “It is good to see what we have achieved and what challenges we need to work on. This self-evaluation tool is very important to us.” The accreditation coordinator, Caith, described how she values accreditation, “For the accreditation process, you want an organisation that has high standards of educational expectations to say that your school is meeting those international standards.” Depending on the development and introduction of new educational techniques and approaches, international standards may change periodically. As the superintendent,
Peter, commented, “It is accreditation for continuing improvement, why wouldn’t you continue improvement as a school?”

However, parent perceptions of accreditation make this process important for any school. Although CBS is a non-profit school aiming for educational excellence, it is still important to satisfy parents’ expectations. The superintendent, Peter, described their expectations about accreditation:

I think parents (increasingly) recognise that if a school isn’t accredited, they need to ask very direct questions about why not … Parents are becoming more (aware of) what (accreditation) means … If the school … just opened, it’s obviously not going to be accredited yet, but a school like CBS, which has been operating since the seventies, if it wasn’t accredited … parents should be asking … why not?

5.7.2 Accreditation process and its efficiency

Accreditation through CIS involves a comprehensive process that can take up to five years to complete, starting when the school applies by completing an information sheet. Every school department gathers evidence and information to be presented to two accreditation committee members when they visit. If these visitors approve of what they observe during their visit, the school begins a self-study period of up to 18 months. Everybody, including parents, should be involved in this study, and every action of the school should be reported with transparency because they will be verified by the accreditation team when they visit after receiving the report. Self-study is an important process as explained by the accreditation coordinator, “Self-study … helps you to be better … It takes 18 months going over everything, making sure it all aligns. It’s about 800 pages worth.”

According to the curriculum coordinator, Caith, the CIS accreditation agency focuses on eight areas of interest during the accreditation process: (i) teaching and learning; (ii) governance and leadership; (iii) faculty and support staff; (iv) access to teaching and learning; (v) operational system; (vi) school culture and partnership for learning; (vii) parent community; and (viii) extracurricular activities, as well as align everything at the school to the United Nations Declarations of Human Rights. Thus, to ensure the validity of
a school’s self-study report, CIS asks for further supporting documents during their visit. Caith explained this process:

> We fill out the chart, then when they are here for one week, they all have different areas. They might (ask to) see personnel files and they pull (some) out at random. They (check if) documents (are) from the place they say they are because everything is in their personnel files. That’s one way they can check to make sure you are doing what you say.

The investigation could include communicating with students and parents in the hallway, as Caith explained, “(Investigating is) not necessarily through the teachers, it’s possibly through the kids and what you see in the hallway, parent comments … the PTA (Parent-Teacher Association), just talking in general.”

The entire five-year process and cycle of accreditation is complex and detailed, requiring considerable time and effort from staff. Caith finished her description of accreditation by saying, “It’s exhausting, it’s really exhausting.”

### 5.7.3 Accreditation effect on curriculum

Because the curriculum of any school is considered the most important factor that gives a school its identity and direction, the curriculum is what the accreditation agency will mainly focuses on. The third teacher, Murad, who worked in CIBS before CBS and was involved in the accreditation process there from the beginning, agreed, “One of the main areas that CIS pays a lot of attention to is the curriculum.”

As identified in CBS and the other two schools, there is no doubt that accreditation has played a major role in improving many areas in these schools, especially the curriculum. For example, CBS did not have a curriculum when they first applied for accreditation, as the curriculum coordinator, Caith, mentioned earlier in Section 5.5.4. As a result of the accreditation report, CBS decided to design its first curriculum, although it was not compulsory to hire the services of a a curriculum coordinator at that time. When asked about this matter, Caith stated, “When we had it, it wasn’t compulsory. Now it might be different in version A, but back then no, although it makes sense to have someone …
overseeing and trying to integrate it.” This issue will also be raised in the following case studies (Chapters Six and Seven) because the position of a curriculum coordinator was not given enough attention by the accreditation agency in spite of the importance of this position in a school.

The main concern for CIS regarding the curriculum was to ensure that it focused on a specific concept, as well as the tools and methods used to achieve that purpose. Included in that should be connected ideas that constitute this concept, starting from Grade 1 to Grade 12, as Caith explained in Section 5.5.4.

Evidence of horizontal alignment is a key element of CIS observations as Caith advised CBS teachers (Section 5.5.4). Although actioned in the past, CBS no longer investigates vertical alignment in individual subjects, according to Caith, “We don’t have to go into vertical alignment anymore because when you did Version 7 it was a vertical and horizontal alignment in an individual subject.” This may be correct for CBS because they attained a certain level of accreditation. However, CIS committees did explore both vertical and horizontal alignment in the other two schools that had a much shorter history of accreditation because neither had reached the accreditation level achieved by CBS.

Other main areas of concern for the CIS accreditation agency are teaching and learning. They observe the kind of learning the school promotes, which they can either approve or suggest something else, as the counsellor, Mousa, commented, “The accreditation gauges what kind of learning happens in the school.” The issue of teaching and learning was clarified in detail by the teacher, Murad, when he asserted that the variety of teaching methods used in CBS were praised by CIS because they include a variety of methods, such as projects, visits of different places and presentations.

This variety of teaching and learning was missing in the other two schools in this study and because of that, CIS provided suggestions for improvement that will be discussed in Chapters Six and Seven.
5.7.4 Accreditation effect on assessment

Assessment is a critical issue in this research as many international schools in Kuwait are not transparent about their assessment methods and its effectiveness. At CBS, assessment tasks are designed to be comparable to current international standards, and CBS students are required to sit for international standardised tests, which give a reliable assessment of a student’s level and skills.

The accreditation committee requires that the school adopts different assessment methods that focus on skills and the implementation of knowledge; assessments are not to rely solely on traditional written examinations and repetition of knowledge. CIS ensures the school complies by checking curriculum maps, as curriculum coordinator, Caith, explained:

I think what they want, and because they believe everything in the 21st century skills and application of knowledge not just the repetition of knowledge, we give them access to our curriculum maps, and I said this is what they are saying they are doing, you can go to anyone and ask, they talked to individual teachers, they look around the halls, they see if this project in place, just from the conversation with teachers, they ask the kids because that’s what you suppose to do, you suppose to go in the playground and talk to the kids informally.

This is confirmed by the third teacher, Murad, who stated clearly, “The major exams have fewer marks, and the students’ group activities and projects have a big percentage of marks.”

Another essential aspect of a proper and reliable assessment is international standardised testing. At CBS, many international standardised tests are being organised for their students, including the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test, SAT, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), IOWA and APs. The school is concerned about this issue because it guarantees transparent assessment of the students and gives a true indication of the school’s educational level. According to Caith, the curriculum coordinator, CIS emphasises the importance of organising such tests for students, “They stressed that and we do have MAP
testing, SAT testing, and AP exams. We don’t do the IOWA tests … because we are a bilingual school … but MAP testing is good because it can go international and regional.”

Furthermore, the accreditation committee inspects test results to ensure they were conducted correctly. When asked about this issue, Caith answered, “When you are doing the report, (CIS) asks for all these kinds of things, and put them there for the last five years, the thing is what might come they want as many original documents.”

In contrast, the other two schools under observation in this study have been accredited for many years and yet at the time of data collection, there were still no international standardised tests organised for their students. There were requests to do so, prompting the questions: Why is it taking such a long time to organise the tests? Why does CIS not considered this is be an urgent matter?

One important explanation regarding assessments is that although the CIS committee suggested the school organise international standardised tests for their students and they inspected the results to make sure that the tests were organised correctly, this does not mean that CIS monitors the academic performance of students or the school collectively. When the superintendent, Peter, was asked about this matter, he responded, “They don’t monitor the academic performance.”

5.7.5 Accreditation effect on teachers

Having qualified teachers in any school is one of the main factors in producing quality education. In international schools in Kuwait, this issue is critical because Western-qualified teachers are expensive and the visa process to allow them to work in Kuwait is complex. This leads to the question: Do accreditation agencies, such as CIS, require accredited schools to employ qualified teachers? CBS accreditation coordinator, Caith, answered, “Yes, we’re supposed to … They want to know (and see) all the qualifications … the subject (of) their degree … what they’re teaching at what grade level, how many years.”
A question is asked about CIS needing to confirm staff and teacher qualifications: Does the accreditation committee take action or seek clarification if the school has teachers without proper qualifications or teaching subjects outside their qualifications? Caith continued her explanation:

I don’t know actually if they bring it up. We try really hard to follow standards so almost everybody’s teaching what they should be teaching. Some teachers aren’t, but they have work experience in the subject they … teach … If the whole school were not qualified, (CIS) will say something, but they want to make sure before they accredit you that you do have qualified staff, at least qualified on paper.

From this comment, it is difficult to know the CIS committee’s reaction about having unqualified teachers in CBS because it has good records of employing qualified teachers. However, it is possible that the CIS committee did find cases where teachers at CBS taught subjects they were not qualified to teach, but the committee did not take any action. In contrast to the CBS situation, the other two schools in this study (analysed in Chapters Six and Seven) have many unqualified teachers and yet they are accredited. The findings of investigating this issue in the next two case studies produce interesting information.

Caith was also asked whether the CIS committee would evaluate the salaries of staff and management, and report them to the school to take action, if required. Caith answered:

They didn’t, they didn’t have things but one of questions I remember would be from the staff about do you think it’s fair internationally about this and this, they want the input from the staff and so they would get that, they look at the salaries I believe to make sure that it is equitable and not underpaid and they will talk to the POT about that, you know you have to enhance the package, you should be doing this, you are an international school, you’re following our standards and this is like an international salary, they will suggest it, I don’t think they could tell you to do it.

Regarding pay scales and salaries, as shown on the school’s website, CBS pays some of the highest salaries in Kuwait because they hire predominantly qualified and experienced
teachers and staff. The issue of low and inconsistent salaries is critical for the other two schools in this study.

Another key factor relevant to teachers is PD. Despite the high standard of PD programs at CBS, the PD coordinator, Lina, appreciates the CIS committee visits because they put forward suggestions, and eventually the school reacts positively and implements these recommendations. Lina stated, “Having accreditation (is great) because they put a little bit of pressure through their report to make changes in the school.”

5.7.6 Accreditation connection to neoliberalism and cosmopolitanism

International accreditation, according to Baltodano (2012), is one of the major forces of neoliberalism, which ensures the quality of education in international schools and the marketing of this kind of school. It also plays a significant role in relation to cosmopolitanism (Baltodano, 2012). Accreditation agencies, such as CIS, focus on elements of global citizenship (Keller, 2015) and it is part of the pragmatic current of international education (Keller, 2015). CBS students, as shown in the analysis above, are more open minded than other students who attend government schools in Kuwait, but their development of intercultural understanding is still limited because the majority (over 90%) of the CBS student population is Kuwaiti, and this situation restricts their ability to improve their understanding of other cultures due to a lack of interaction.

5.8 Quality of education

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the approach or framework used to measure the quality of education in bilingual international schools in this study is Cheng’s (2003) concept of education quality assurance. In this framework, the quality of education covers three main areas: (i) internal; (ii) interface; and (iii) future quality assurance. This conceptual framework focuses on all areas of education and was “strongly dependent upon the relevant context, on the interests, values and beliefs of the stakeholders involved” (Kecojevic, 2012, p. 145). The study participants from these bilingual schools are representatives of most stakeholders involved in education.
The original plans for this theme included all aspects of data analysis relevant to the input-process-outcome-context areas of education in these schools. However, since many areas were covered in detail in the previous themes, I decided to focus on core elements not previously analysed in depth that directly affected and measured the quality of education at CBS.

These areas or categories involve student behaviour, teachers, (academic) administration, management, staff qualifications and experience, orientation and PD programs, education quality drivers, and academic achievement (performance).

5.8.1 Nature and behaviour of students

In Kuwait, the problem of student behaviour is widespread in government and private schools. Since parents pay private school fees, behaviour is a major obstacle in achieving positive results. The management and administration of most private schools, including international schools, strive to satisfy parents (customers) by any means possible, even when their children misbehave by committing offences that require suspension or expulsion.

However, the situation at CBS is different despite most students belonging to prominent, wealthy families; CBS students and their families are serious about their education and future. Teacher, Murad, explained, “(Ninety percent of CBS students) are from high quality, wealthy families who value knowledge and education … They push their kids to achieve and acquire a high quality of education and knowledge.”

CBS administration has firm, effective disciplinary policies in place to deal with misbehaviour. Students know the boundaries and consequences of misbehaving, as Murad explained, “The worst thing that could happen to (a CBS) student is (being sent) to the (principal’s office) by the teacher as a result of behaviour because he knows the administration supports the teacher in dealing with his unacceptable attitude.” This matter was confirmed by HSP Jalal, “The behaviour of students and discipline issues are very important and we really take care of this.”
5.8.2 Teachers

CBS teachers are valued highly and considered “the main asset of a quality school” according to the third parent Jasem. CBS students are also content with their teachers. Abdullah, a Grade 12 student, explained, “I am also very happy with the education at (CBS); it’s not just about the curriculum, but also about the teachers who taught us.”

Teachers at CBS are fortunate because of their healthy relationship with the parent community, which has a positive effect on the school, as explained by Jasem, “Because of the unique community of the school, which includes the parents, teachers and administration, we have to know how to manage changes. All these parties are involved in managing change (within the) school.”

As an important element of working effectively, CBS teachers have full authority over the way they teach the curriculum in order to deliver it effectively. They have the option to use different resources and activities that suit their student needs. Murad confirmed, “The teacher at (CBS) has full authority over his curriculum.”

Moreover, CBS treats all teachers with dignity and equality regardless of their background, especially concerning salaries and allowances, which is not the case in all international schools in Kuwait. As an Egyptian national, Murad was impressed with his salary and allowance because it was similar to Western teachers. He stated, “The best thing is that all (CBS) teachers from different nationalities and backgrounds are equal in everything, especially salaries and allowances.”

CBS strives to improve education and introduce creative ideas that are new to Kuwait and the Gulf region. One example is employing learning coaches whose job is to assist and train teachers in relevant and necessary pedagogical skills. The PD coordinator, Lina, explained:

We hired four learning coaches and we have them on campus to go and assist teachers in areas they feel like they need some growth or they are having a problem, maybe the class feels they are not behaving well, they need another pair of eyes to come in and say you know what I notice is this, maybe you could try this or they could do a demonstration lesson, or many things in, and
they’re here full time to help teachers so you don’t have to wait until there is a conference and you have to go to a conference on classroom management, that might be in December, what are you going to do for the first semester, this is really been a new addition to our school.

Undoubtedly, this atmosphere encourages teachers, whether local or Western, to continue as long-term employees at CBS in comparison to other international schools in Kuwait. HSP Jalal commented, “Usually, Western teachers stay 2-3 years at international schools in Kuwait. But I have Western staff who have been at (CBS) for 6, 7, 12, 13, 14 years.”

5.8.3 Academic administration

The CBS academic administration, superintendent, principals and assistant principals play a central role in managing the academic affairs of the school in a professional manner. They are involved in all aspects of the school’s education process. It is rare to find qualified, experienced administrators managing international schools in Kuwait mainly because it is costly to employ them and pay their salaries. Many schools promote existing staff to principal and superintendent positions although they are not trained for such jobs. CBS administrators, who are mostly qualified and trained appropriately, are typically Westerners with higher degrees in education. There is one non-Western principal, but he is experienced and well-qualified, having graduated and obtained his degrees from the USA.

The main concern for CBS is to employ the best candidate, especially for the senior positions. Therefore, they follow interesting procedures that involve principals and the board when choosing a new superintendent; parents, teachers and the board are involved when choosing a new principal. The chairperson, Mary, explained:

The board is 100% responsible for recruiting the director. He is the same as a superintendent, and the principals are involved in (the process). There is a committee responsible for recruiting principals … The director is ultimately responsible for (selecting) the principal, but we have a committee that includes teachers, PTA (Parent-Teacher Association) members, board members, etc. they’re all part of that screening process.
Before the school year begins, CBS plans the academic year and employs new teachers. One important element, a critical issue for international schools in Kuwait, is employing and retaining Western teachers long-term because recruitment is a complex process. Teachers can move to other schools or leave Kuwait within a short time of their arrival if the situation is not satisfactory for them. However, teachers tend to stay at CBS because of the healthy, professional atmosphere that has been constructed. The third teacher, Murad, discussed his experience:

Two weeks before we started the school year, they invited us to a nice restaurant where … the superintendent gave a warm welcome and made me feel very comfortable during this dinner. After that we had meetings with all administration staff, coordinators, heads of departments … All these meetings were aimed at making new staff familiar with the school culture and working environment … I felt I am a part of a big family, which made me feel very welcomed.

The administrator’s job extends to supporting teachers to enable them be able function efficiently. Regarding the support Murad receives from the HSP, the Head of the English Department, Sam, commented, “My principal is unquestionably one of the finest men I’ve ever known, and without a question the finest administrator I’ve ever had the pleasure of working for.”

The policy of long-term retention is followed with the administration due to its positive effect on the education process at CBS. Parent Jasem, also a board member, explained, “The middle and high school principals have been there for about 10 years, so there is stability in these departments.”

5.8.4 Management

The term ‘management’ refers to the school board and its members who oversees all matters relating to management and governance of the school. The chairperson of the board, Mary, describes the CBS board as “a true school board” because its members are carefully chosen by the owner for their experience and qualifications, and many have attained higher degrees. Mary, who is a doctor at Kuwait University, said, “Our board is
quite diverse, and it’s a real board. Some schools here have boards (based on) ownership, but … ours is a mixture of people from the community: parents, former parents or alumni and (also) an owner’s representative.”

Lina, the PD coordinator, explained that with the owner’s support, board members are willing to spend time and take action to improve learning, teaching and education in order for the school to be distinguished in the region. Hence the school board pays some of the highest salaries in Kuwait to attract the best teachers and staff, and to ensure they are satisfied about their rights and benefits. HSP Jalal explained:

Everybody takes his indemnity and there are no under the table deals or games or not given somebody his rights. So there is a system (of clear rights and allowances) there that exists … In addition to that we do have Arab teachers who are treated as or have an overseas contract who are bilingual teachers … We are in the top schools in Kuwait regarding the pay scale and salaries and I think in the years to come we will be No. 1 in the package we offer.

5.8.5 Staff qualifications and experience

As mentioned above, CBS management seeks to employ and retain well-qualified, experienced staff. An example of this policy in action can be seen in the high school English department, where the head is a qualified American English teacher who has been teaching English in Kuwait for 11 years, eight of them at CBS. He has 15 years of teaching experience.

Another example of qualified, experienced CBS staff is the curriculum and accreditation coordinator who is an American with a Bachelor of Science and Master of Language Arts and Education. She has attended many training courses, workshops, seminars and webinars in the USA and Europe. She was a teacher for 27 years, mostly in CBS, before she became a coordinator.

In the interview, the superintendent, Peter, described his qualifications and experience:
I am the director of CBS, and this is the second year for me as a director of CBS, the 18th year of being a director and superintendent of many international schools all over the world. I have been a superintendent in Kuwait before and Saudi Arabia, West Africa, China, South Korea, Canada and the United Kingdom. I have three undergraduate degrees from Canada, I have a master’s degree from the University of Bath in England and my Doctorate from the University of Bath in England in the area of governance and management.

5.8.6 Orientation and professional development programs

Professional development programs generally include workshops, conferences, training courses, online courses and observations of others in the same field. These programs are not generally executed in international schools in Kuwait because they are considered, in the eyes of unqualified administrators and management, to be costly without gaining clear benefits. This misunderstanding by the unqualified judgement of administrators and management is due to their need to increase profits and maintain their job security. Proper PD programs have a direct link to improving student learning and increasing the quality of education.

Since CBS is a non-profit school, the management team spends funds and acts to provide the highest quality of education by Kuwaiti and regional standards. During the interviews, it was apparent that CBS follows a creative approach in organising diverse and effective PD programs for their staff, which were sometimes open to teachers from other international schools in Kuwait.

The quality of education at CBS is constantly improving as a result of an effective school policy to improve their staff and teachers academically by assigning a generous budget for internal PD programs in addition to sending staff abroad for training. The third teacher, Murad, explained enthusiastically that “the budget assigned to the professional development programs is very big” in CBS and teachers can apply to attend any training program they need to improve their skills.
The school starts their PD program by preparing a well-organised orientation for teachers so they are well-prepared for their first year at CBS. The first teacher, Sam, said, “I was very well-inducted into the culture … and their expectations of the students. (CBS) did a great job (preparing us).”

Additionally, CBS organises a large orientation program called ‘Welcome to Kuwait’ for all expatriate teachers coming to Kuwait. The PD coordinator, Lina, said:

I also do a Welcome to Kuwait … It’s an open invitation for all private schools that have new expatriate teachers because people are coming to Kuwait … so it’s actually the fourth time we done it, and we had 277 teachers come from 21 schools that sent teachers and we didn’t charge them anything.

The choice of specific PD programs depends on the needs of the staff and teachers, as Lina explained:

With the survey we see what they need and we try to answer that. We also require them to do PD, to stay employed at the school you have to do 50 hours of PD every year, it is not just workshops or conferences, you can read books, you can do book studies, you can do professional learning communities, there are a lot of things you can do.

One inspirational program supported by CBS is the Master’s program in education that is certified by SUNY Buffalo State, an American university; this program is useful for, experienced teachers, working in international schools in Kuwait, who do not have a teaching certificate, which is a requirements for approval by the MOE. Furthermore, the school organises a large education conference in Kuwait every two years where presenters from outside Kuwait are invited as Lina explained.

In addition to these effective programs targeting staff and teachers, the PD coordinator also designed a specific PD program for parents. She explained:

I had a day for parents and I brought somebody just for parents because the truth is education changed since you and I were at school, we aren’t asking them to memorise anymore, we are learning, we are collaborating, we are
teaming, we do critical thinking, we are inferring … and parents need to know that too because how are you going to support a child at home … You need to know what we are doing so you can help them.

These outstanding initiatives, which are rarely found in Kuwait or the Gulf region, were achieved because of the dedication of the PD coordinator and other staff who are committed to education and to their school. Moreover, the steadfast support of CBS management made such programs possible by implementing policies that aim to achieve quality education.

5.8.7 Education quality drivers

This section focuses on the main factors or drivers that enabled CBS to plan for, and achieve, quality education. Although previously mentioned in the summary, this section consolidates and clarifies important factors that represent the general effective elements of reaching a high level of success.

The first factor starts from the non-profit policy the school continues to implement since it was established. This policy is claimed by many schools in Kuwait, however, it is not implemented. In CBS, there is transparency because most board members and management are not shareholders, and the owner has only one representative on that board. Many of these well qualified and experienced members are parents whose aim is to continuously improve the school as a whole. This meaning was confirmed by the chairperson, Mary, when she said, “The school do sometimes achieve a capital gain, capital investment programs, for example we rebuilt the school campus and totally renovated and finished that four years ago.”

The second driver is the parents’ involvement in their children’s education. In spite of being well known characters in society and having good jobs, the parents are very involved in school activities; many congregate at the school every day after driving their children to attend, and discuss matters on education. Two parents I met were board members. This issue was noticed by teacher, Murad, who commented on the positive influence of parent involvement, when he said, “The influence of the parents in CBS is much higher, have
better effects, more positive, more beneficial to society, better effects on teachers, good influence on their kids than CIBS.”

This positive influence and affect stems from the parents’ interest in the kind of education they want for their children. They are interested in a ‘holistic approach to education’ as the superintendent, Peter, explained

First and foremost they are very interested in the academic performance, the marks which is quite typical in this country and this region, I think there are a number of parents who value the holistic approach to education and recognise the value for creating students who have more than just great marks and that’s certainly we as a school striving for.

The third factor or driver that affects the quality of education and enables CBS to improve its future plans is to examine the quality of its graduates and universities they are about to attend. In other words, CBS identifies outcomes of their education process and continues to evaluate them, making changes where necessary for improvement. Jasem, a board member, explained how the management evaluates the school:

When we discuss every year the affairs of this school and whether it is doing fine or not we don’t look at the waiting list of students to enter the KG (Kindergarten) department but we focus on the outcome of our graduates and where they study universities.

5.8.8 Academic achievement

This category is a clear indicator of the level of quality education at any school. In international schools in Kuwait, there are generally shared expectations from most parents on what constitutes academic achievement. Therefore, I will focus on these expectations in my analysis of CBS and the other two schools in the study.

The main goal for students in international schools is to develop fluent English language skills, which will enable them to communicate effectively with the outside world, as well as prepare them for attendance at Western universities. Due to the high standard of education at CBS, students graduate with proficiency in both Arabic and English languages. The
counsellor, Mousa, who is an American, confirmed that many CBS students have parents and other relatives who studied in this school because it maintains a good reputation. He said, “It’s one of the best if not the best bilingual school, so kids come out of here knowing English and Arabic fluently.”

In addition to achieving excellent English language skills, students are expected to function well internationally, as teacher, Sam, explained:

So can they compete with kids internationally, 100% ... They understand the importance of learning how to analyse when had to think critically, learning to synthesise, they understand all of that and so they get it from us and they get it from home and so yes our students can compete with any students worldwide without question.

Ultimately, parents choose these schools to prepare their children for university, especially Western universities. Parent Jasem described his daughter’s transition to university in the USA:

So when I asked my daughter, who is studying now in her second year at the university in the states, about how she is coping with her study at the university ... She said that she was well prepared and ready to enter the university when she graduated from this school. I can say that our aim was achieved when I see my oldest daughter at this level of education and knowledge.

It is a significant achievement that many CBS graduates attend prestigious universities abroad as the superintendent, Peter, said proudly, “Last year, graduates (were) accepted by some of the (world’s) best universities ... One (CBS) student (just) graduated from Harvard. Another (was) accepted into Stanford for the first time in the history of the school.”

5.8.9 Educational quality assurance concept

In accordance with Cheng’s (2003) concept of quality assurance, CBS interviews were analysed to connect internal, interface and future quality assurance elements. Regarding the
internal quality assurance of education in CBS, stakeholders’ comments indicated that student academic achievements that are linked to excellent English language skills meet the criteria to be fully prepared to attend Western universities.

For the interface quality assurance of education in CBS, it was found, according to stakeholders’ perspectives, that CBS parents’ involvement in managing the school had a positive effect on the quality of education in the school. In addition to parental involvement, as part of interface quality assurance of education, the quality of students, teachers, administration and management had a major effect on the quality of education in this school. CBS students, as observed during their focus sessions and comments from other interviewees, are serious about their education and respectful towards their teachers and administration. Teachers and academic administration in CBS, as stated by many participants, are well qualified and continue to work in the school for a long time, which affects education positively and creates a sense of stability in this context. The CBS board of trustees (management) is comprised of qualified and experienced members aiming to achieve better results without focusing on profit. Another quality indicator of interface quality assurance of education in CBS involves continuous improvement of staff members and practices (Cheng, 2003). Personal development programs created and adopted by CBS are, according to the participants, considered some of the best in Kuwait.

For future quality assurance of education in CBS, the analysis focuses on individualisation, localisation and globalisation of education (Cheng, 2003). In relation to individualisation, learning in CBS was found to focus on their students, incorporating a student-centred approach to be used widely. CBS students, according to participant comments, are independent learners who can choose from a variety of methods, subjects and extracurricular activities, which are facilitated by the school. CBS students are experiencing both localised and globalised learning as they are taught in two languages, Arabic (local) and English (international), through local and international curricula by local and international teachers with Western and other nationalities. CBS, according to parent and student perspectives, demonstrates a successful example of an effective balance of local
and international education, which is delivered by qualified teachers from different parts of the world.

5.9 Conclusion

The CBS case study revealed their long history and notable accomplishment within Kuwait. Since it was established in 1978, the CBS non-profit policy has positively affected its outcomes. All parents interviewed were satisfied and enthusiastic to support the school. Students at CBS were satisfied with receiving bilingual education because it gave them the opportunity to study international education while learning Arabic simultaneously, as well enabling them to maintain their identity. The English curriculum in this school focuses on its students’ personality to build character. Students and parents praised extra curricula activities and the wide range of elective subjects. CBS has full control of their English curriculum and the MOE in Kuwait has no curriculum relevant policies or regulations related to international schools apart from textbook censorship. CBS is considered the first bilingual school and one of the first international schools accredited by CIS in Kuwait, giving it a good reputation that increases parents’ trust in its education system. The students attending CBS demonstrated positive behaviour and commitment to their studies. Qualified administrative and teaching staff played major roles in improving the quality of education in CBS. Another important issue offered by CBS to improve education is its PD program, which is designed to fulfil its needs and those of other international schools in Kuwait. Central to quality education at CBS is parental involvement in managing school affairs.
Chapter Six: Case Study – Cultural Identity Bilingual School (CIBS)

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the case study of Cultural Identity Bilingual School (CIBS) is explained. The six core themes constructed and used in the CBS case study are being used here for CIBS: (i) history and rapid growth; (ii) parents’ choice and satisfaction; (iii) curriculum and the school system; (iv) national educational policies; (v) accreditation and its policies; and (vi) the quality of education. These themes directly or indirectly relate to the research questions and are constructed from coding and analysing the data gathered from interviewing 10 types of participants involved in the education process at CIBS. These participants include three parents, 14 students, two teachers currently employed, one former CIBS teacher, one academic counsellor, two coordinators (curriculum/PD and accreditation), two HSPs, one superintendent, and the Head of the Board. Of the 27 participants who were interviewed in CIBS, there were 13 males and 14 females. Two student focus group interviews comprised of one female focus group interview that included seven Grade 12 students and one male focus group interview with seven Grade 12 students. Conducting the focus group interviews separately was necessary because the school, being a conservative Islamic entity, segregates girls and boys, who study in two separate adjacent buildings. The remaining participants (six males and seven females) were interviewed individually. Tables 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 provide details about the participants in CIBS.

Table 6.1 CIBS Participant Classification Sheet – Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Native Speaker of English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tyseer</td>
<td>Head of English Department – boys section</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>Postgraduate degree</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahlam</td>
<td>Grade 12 English teacher – girls section</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Jordanian</td>
<td>Bachelor degree</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Job</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>Qualification</td>
<td>Native Speaker of English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moh’d</td>
<td>High school physics teacher</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Egyptian</td>
<td>Bachelor of Physics and Master of Education</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lama</td>
<td>High School Counsellor</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>Bachelor of Management Information</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heyam</td>
<td>Professional Development &amp; Curriculum Coordinator</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Egyptian</td>
<td>Master degree</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salma</td>
<td>Accreditation Coordinator</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>Bachelor degree</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taha</td>
<td>High School Principal – boys section</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Canadian of Eritrean background</td>
<td>Master of Education</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alana</td>
<td>High School Principal – girls section</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zainab</td>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>Graduate Diploma of Education</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nisreen</td>
<td>Chairperson</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>Bachelor degree</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2  CIBS Participant Classification Sheet – Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muhammed</td>
<td>Head of CIBS Islamic Studies Department</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>Undergraduate diploma</td>
<td>Expert in his field and well-known in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abu-Sakeb</td>
<td>Shop owner – textile trader</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>Bachelor of Engineering (USA)</td>
<td>Very involved with his children’s education and very conservative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohsen</td>
<td>Doctor – surgeon</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Syrian</td>
<td>Bachelor of Medicine (Syria)</td>
<td>Well-educated and very involved in his children’s education and the school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.3  CIBS Participant Classification Sheet – Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saif</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaldoon</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdelfattah</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Lebanese</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mustafa</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osman</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Syrian</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baker</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morad</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamya</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suraya</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aseel</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leena</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norma</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suhad</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rana</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.2  School profile

Table 6.4  CIBS School information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum and School System</th>
<th>Bilingual school: local Arabic curriculum and American curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>Established by a well-known wealthy Kuwaiti woman with the help of her friends, who are also from wealthy Kuwaiti families. The school is under her administration and management but owned by a charity organisations in Kuwait. The school is described as non-profit since the board does not take any profit, but in reality the profit goes to the charity organisation and it is not known how much money is reinvested in the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ Background</td>
<td>The majority (more than 95%) of parents are Kuwaitis from educated and financially comfortable families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Academic Staff</td>
<td>Approximately 300 staff members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Students</td>
<td>Approximately 1900 students from K-12, including males and females, taught in two separate adjacent buildings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Teachers’ Nationalities

| English curriculum subjects | The majority are from Arab countries and the remainder are from Western countries (America, Canada, Australia). The majority of the teachers are not native speakers of English. |
| Arabic curriculum subjects | All teachers are from Arabic countries, principally Egypt. |

### Teachers’ Qualifications

Most teachers are experienced but many of them do not have education degrees or certificates.

### Administration Qualifications

Majority from Arabic countries with Arabic qualifications

### Accreditation

Accredited by CIS accreditation agency

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### 6.2.1 Location

CIBS is located close to the main streets of a Kuwaiti suburb with easy access from many roads. The school was designed and built with the help and support from many parties who donated to support a project that would provide a bilingual education in a strict Islamic context. The design comprises two identical buildings connected by access doors for staff only. CIBS owns the school building and grounds, an advantage that is not available for most international schools in Kuwait. The school building is fully equipped with facilities such as playgrounds, theatre, swimming pools, library and spacious classes, all of which make the school environment safe and suitable by international school standards.

### 6.2.2 Context of school

The school is considered one of the most conservative Islamic schools in Kuwait. The main aim of establishing this school was to provide an international education in an environment where students could maintain their Islamic identity and values. Therefore, one of the main issues in CIBS was the segregation of boys and girls within two separate buildings. Moreover, segregation also applies to teachers and staff in most departments. Most students at CIBS are Kuwaitis from religious families whose main concern is the respect for Islamic principles and identity.
6.2.3 History and establishment

As mentioned above, CIBS was established after a need for an international school that prioritises Islamic values and identity was realised. Nisreen, the founder and chairperson of this school, said:

I am the head of the board, and the reasons behind establishing this school are that our children were in international schools but the culture and values of these schools are different to our local values and culture, so in 1996, we decided to establish a school that is academically high and suits our culture and values.

Many parents in the community welcomed the principles and aims of CIBS. As a second parent said, “I chose this school mainly for one reason: that the head of the board … established the school on the principles of many books she wrote, which revolve around Islamic vision in teaching and learning.”

The story of the establishment of this school is very similar to that of CBS. A group of women agreed to an idea proposed by the chairperson of constructing an innovative bilingual international school to suit those in the community who wanted their children to attain an international education in a conservative Islamic environment. CIBS was established after the Gulf War during a period when other international schools were also set up in Kuwait.

6.2.4 Demographics of the students and families background

CIBS provides education for pre-kindergarten to Grade 12 children; it had about 1900 students at the time of data collection; the majority of students (over 95%) are Kuwaitis from religious, educated, wealthy families. Others belong to various Arabic nationalities such as Palestinian and Egyptian, who are generally children of staff working at the school.

The first parent, Muhammed, said the Islamic school environment is similar to the atmosphere in his homeland:
In this school, I found that my children feel the balance between the house environment and the school environment and this affects the way of thinking and culture … so there (is) a kind of stability in culture, environment and habits.

This aspect of focusing on the local culture, habits and morals was confirmed by the superintendent, Zainah, who said, “The most important thing for the parents is good morals and after that comes academic performance and (other) issues.” The HSP for girls, Alana, confirmed that parents favour the Islamic orientation of CIBS, “The majority of our parents want first and foremost Quran and Islamic studies.”

6.2.5 Description of school premises and classes.

The school is well designed, built with two identical sections to allow for the segregation of boys and girls. Externally, the school resembles a castle that is fully enclosed, which suits the general conservative nature of privacy, especially for female students and staff. Its design helps to keep the building cool in Kuwait, one of the hottest areas in the world. The school is well organised and has good facilities, such as reasonably sized classrooms, science laboratories, computer laboratories, a media centre, gyms, swimming pools, small playgrounds and a theatre.

6.2.6 Staff and teachers

There were over 300 staff members at CIBS at the time of data collection, most of whom have Arabic origins and graduated from Arabic universities. Most of the academic administration (superintendent and principals) are also of Arabic origin and have achieved Arabic qualifications. On many occasions, according to what I experienced personally during my working time there, and also according to friends who worked or are still working there, CIBS employed qualified Western staff but did not retain them for long because the particular style of management was not suitable. The Head of the High School English Department, Tyseer, criticised the teachers’ qualifications as most of them have bachelor degrees in their fields but not teaching qualifications or certificates, “The majority … have degrees but are not qualified teachers.”
In Sections 6.3 to 6.8, the research findings in CIBS are described. These are based on the same six themes used and analysed in the CBS case study: (i) history and rapid growth; (ii) parents’ choice and satisfaction; (iii) curriculum and school system; (iv) national educational policies; (v) accreditation and its policies; and (vi) quality of education.

6.3 **History and rapid growth**

As mentioned in the CBS case study in Section 5.3, this theme (which directly relates to the first research supporting question), requires an explanation of the factors that contributed to the emergence and rapid growth of international schools in Kuwait. The categories employed in this discussion are similar to those in Section 5.3: (i) history and school information; (ii) choice reasons; (iii) profit-orientation; (iv) culture and identity; (v) university studies and future plans.

6.3.1 **History and school information**

The origin of this school is similar to CBS, in that community members, in this case a group of Kuwaiti women decided to establish a specific kind of school. The chairperson and founder of CIBS, Nisreen, shared her reasons for establishing the school, “The school my children were in provided good quality education but offered culture and values that contradicted our local culture and values. This situation caused many (concerns) pedagogically and morally.”

However, the culture and values mentioned here do not only refer to Arabic culture but also the conservative practice of Islamic culture. Therefore, the main goal for establishing this school was to provide a bilingual international school with a strict Islamic context suitable for religious families and their children.

The non-profit nature of CIBS is vague. Management claims a non-profit status since the charity organisation that owns the school receives profits but there is no evidence or transparency concerning investment or financial issues. The second parent, Abu Sakeb, explained, “In the beginning … was really a non-profit school but as a result of the
development of charity organisations, the school started aiming (to achieve) profit so they could improve and expand more in the business of education.”

One significant characteristic of CIBS concerns its administration. Since it was established, the management and Head of Academic Administration has been controlled by the same people or their siblings, despite most of them not qualified in the field of education or experienced in such positions. For example, the superintendent position was occupied by the sister of the Head of the Board; then it was occupied by her friend, who helped in establishing the school and is a board member; and now it is occupied by her daughter who is considered the most qualified as she studied and trained in courses and degrees in education.

6.3.2 Choice reasons.

As mentioned previously in Section 5.3.2, parents were not the only participants asked about their perspective on why parents choose international bilingual schools for their children. The perspectives of students, principals and the superintendent were also sought because these participants are all in direct contact with the parents. Generally, their perspectives were similar to those of parents discussed in 5.3.2, and related to the following five ideas: (i) poor quality of education in government schools; (ii) importance of Islamic identity and cultural values; (iii) English language skills; (iv) preparing students to attend universities; and (v) benefits of an international education.

The poor quality of education in government schools was one of the main reasons why motivated parents sought an alternative path to provide their children with good quality education. Parent Muhanned said, “The scientific level of the government schools is very low.” Osman, a Grade 12 student, expressed a similar idea, “Education has lost its message in (government) schools.” Furthermore, the HSP for boys, Taha, suggested that parents chose bilingual international schools because “they have no faith in the public school system”. The superintendent, Zainah, explained why education in private schools is better than government schools:
Normally parents choose private schools, especially international schools, because they aim for better education. They can choose the school they trust because they know the owners and the board members and how they employ qualified and competent teachers who are better than government school (teachers).

Protecting Islamic identity and cultural values was the key reason for choosing a bilingual school such as CIBS. It is well-known for its conservative Islamic context, shown clearly in the segregations of boys and girls in addition to scheduling extra time to focus on Islamic studies and memorising the Quran. Parent Mohsen commented, “Since the curriculum of this school is designed to include and respect Islamic values … I thought … it is the best option.” Leen, a Grade 12 student, explained how much her parents favour the Islamic environment of CIBS, “My parents really adore our school … They say, ‘Your school is the best because the Islamic concept and the environment (in CIBS) is better than any other school.” The superintendent, Zainah, confirmed this opinion, “The reason (parents) choose this school is because it is well-known … (for) protecting the Arabic identity … We aim to protect Islamic and moral values.”

Acquiring English language skills was undoubtedly a major factor behind parents choosing bilingual international schools for their children. Parent Muhanned stated, “(English language) was one of the factors … (for) choosing this school and not … (a) government school.” Lamya, a Grade 12 student, also expressed a similar point of view, “My parents brought me here because of the Islamic environment and English (language).” Another student, Khaldoon, gave an interesting example of government students having weak English language skills, “I have many friends (who attend government schools). Every weekend, we go together to restaurants, but they can’t order food because they do not speak good English.” Furthermore, the HSP for boys, Taha, clarified the importance placed on English language by parents:

Many university courses are now taught in English, and this is also the case in Kuwait University. So the public school students feel a shock when they start their university degrees whether inside or outside Kuwait because the English language level in public schools is very low.
Preparing students to attend university is another reason that motivated parents to choose such schools. Parent Muhanned explained this issue in detail, “This school prepares (students) better than government schools to attend universities, especially science colleges, and this level of preparation is not available in government schools on a wide scale.” However, parent Mohsen criticised the curriculum and subjects taught in Grades 11 and 12 because these subjects were not adequate for his son to be accepted directly into his preferred Western college or other Western universities:

I tried to move my second son to another school but … I couldn’t. (However), I moved my third son in Grade 8 to another international school so he can get the IB diploma … Applying to universities (will be) easier for him.

Another reason for choosing CIBS is that it supplies an international, rather than a Kuwaiti, education. This element emerged during discussions with the participants, especially in relation to preparing for attending university abroad. However, none of the parents mentioned this in specific terms except one, Mohsen, who is not Kuwaiti and looking to send his son to study abroad:

This kind of education is necessary because our world became more open and knowledge became … unified, so it is necessary to unify education system principles, especially in middle and high school stages and to be connected to what’s happening with international sciences and be at close levels with education internationally. A big number of (CIBS) graduates … study overseas in Western universities, so the competition became international and they have to compete with students from all over the world.

6.3.3 Profit-orientation

As mentioned earlier, when CIBS was established, the management’s main concern was to provide an alternative international bilingual education for religious families as opposed to making a profit. However, the charity organisation that owns the school started to recognise that profit-making is a valuable commodity that should be protected. Parent Mohsen criticised the low quality services the school provides, which do not match the high fees they charge:
When I was in the parents’ committee, we discussed the issue of employing good quality, qualified, experienced teachers like other schools do. We requested to pay them the same salaries to attract them to (CIBS) … The point is they charge high fees the same as other schools but they don’t bring qualified teachers like other schools.

6.3.4 Culture and identity

As mentioned in Section 5.3.4, bilingual international schools became popular in Kuwait because they offer a dual Arabic/English curricula and do so in a conservative cultural atmosphere. In addition, this school is distinguished by the conservative Islamic context that attracted many religious families who prefer this sort of teaching environment. Parent Muhammed mentioned this issue many times during his interview, and it was clearly the most important element for him when choosing CIBS. He said, “Putting them in an environment … similar to the house environment, which keeps their identity, traditions and culture, was what made me not put them in a (Western) international school.” This point of view aligned with parent Mohsen who prioritised culture, identity and Islamic principles above quality of education. Mohsen explained:

That’s why, despite paying the same fees, I didn’t put my children in American or British international schools in spite of the seriousness and professionalism of learning and teaching in those schools. My ambition is not only to provide good quality education to my children but also to give them Islamic, Arabic character (that) belongs in our society.

6.3.5 University studies and future plans

As explained in Section 5.3.5, the majority of parents and students prefer to study in Western universities where they can gain a better education and career prospects. Therefore, parents choose international schools because they think their children will have a stronger chance to gain admission to Western universities. The HSPs, superintendent, and most importantly, academic counsellors were asked to comment on this issue.

The HSP for boys, Taha, pointed out one reason that motivates parents to choose international schools, “A lot of parents want their kids to benefit from the overseas
scholarships offered by the government; English is essential in succeeding in and passing these courses.” Regarding the number of students who eventually study in Western universities abroad, the academic counsellor, Lama, gave an estimate based on previous graduates, “Around 60% of the male students study overseas in the US, Canada, Australia and UK but (only) about 20% of the female students study outside Kuwait.” However, many students are eligible to receive government scholarships to study in local private Western universities in Kuwait, which also require students to have a good command of the English language.

6.3.6 International schools in Kuwait and neoliberalism

Regarding the privatisation of education and international schools in connection to neoliberal understanding (Ball, 2012), CIBS was established by a group of women as a private international bilingual school to cater for Kuwaiti children from conservative Muslim families. These parents were looking for an alternative international education system as a better option in the age of globalisation to local government education due to its weakness (MacDonald, 2006). As shown in the analysis above, the school is a for-profit-school despite claiming the opposite. This conservative Islamic bilingual international school started a trend of marketisation of education to cater for children from conservative Muslim families. Many profitable Islamic bilingual international schools have since been established, all following a similar trend. They became business-like organisations with a social mission (MacDonald, 2006). The MOE facilitated establishing such schools in Kuwait by issuing a licence that allowed CIBS to operate as a school for enrolment by Kuwaiti children. The MOE also endorses certificates issued by such schools and accepts their graduates in Kuwaiti universities and colleges. The Kuwaiti government, through MOE educational policies, acts as a facilitator for such schools to establish a bilingual international education system and expand in Kuwait. According to neoliberal understanding, such policies aided in the expansion of the international education services industry in Kuwait and marketing of these schools (Woo, 2013).
6.4 Parents’ choice and satisfaction

The parents’ choice of CIBS is analysed in Section 6.3.2, revealing that their reasons include the poor standard of education in government schools, Islamic identity and culture values, English language skills, preparing students for entry into universities, and international education. Therefore, the focus of analysis in this section is on parent and student satisfaction in terms of their experiences at CIBS and whether their expectations were being met.

6.4.1 Parents’ satisfaction

Generally, parent and student satisfaction revolves around a friendly Islamic atmosphere of a school. However, some participants were very critical of CIBS academically, and others were not so concerned about receiving high standards of quality education as long as their children could access university after graduating from high school and could be educated in strong Islamic values.

For example, the third parent, Mohsen, is satisfied with his son’s experiences at CIBS because his aim was “to build a balanced Islamic character and this was achieved to a certain extent”. Rana, a female Grade 12 student, expressed a similar belief, “I think this school is unique because it is the only school that has a cultural (Islamic) identity subject. It teaches us morals; I really love this lesson.”

Another source of satisfaction for parents and students is the friendly atmosphere within CIBS. For example, Lamya, a female Grade 12 student, described the warm welcome that new students receive, “When a new girl comes, the whole school knows about her, and the teachers always ask us to welcome her.” This friendly atmosphere was confirmed by the parent, Abu Sakeb:

Most of the teachers deal with students like a father-son relationship. They deal with the Grade 11 and 12 students as friends or brothers and even hang out with them after school … The students may have different problems whether with the principal or with another student, or an emotional problem,
but the administration and teachers act like a big family and try to solve those problems by interacting … in a friendly way with the students.

However, the students’ and parents’ description of a “friendly atmosphere” is not entirely accurate, according to teachers and other staff. As will be discussed in section 6.8.2, the teachers were aware that in order to remain working at CIBS in accordance with administration expectations, they should keep the students and their parents fully satisfied, even at the expense of teaching professionalism and quality of education.

In contrast, the aspect of academic satisfaction was not as expected, according to many perspectives, where important areas were found to be at low standards. CIBS is clearly better than government schools and has higher standards of education, as Saif, a male Grade 12 student, explained, “I am very satisfied with my marks and doing well here … (but) my cousins are always in trouble in government schools and they are not doing well.” Many elements regarding English language skills, elective subject policies, poor and vague management policies, and low quality teachers are sources of dissatisfaction for many of those participants connected with the school.

Lamya, a Grade 12 student, commented on what she saw as a weakness of English language teaching, “My parents brought me here because of Islamic issues and English, but English (teaching) is not that good (here). Some of us have good English because … we brought it from previous schools and (we) work on (it) ourselves outside the school.”

Regarding the elective subject policy at CIBS, there is a limited number of elective subjects. Moreover, Osman, a Grade 12 student, pointed out that electives are not managed properly to facilitate a student’s acceptance into certain courses at Western universities without completing the foundation program. He explained his frustration concerning the difficulties his brother faced in order to join a university course when he graduated from CIBS:

I used to ask my father, ‘Why (did) you put me in this school, especially (as) my brother … faced many difficulties (applying to) universities without the
SAT exams. That’s why I (asked) my father to take me outside this school so I don’t face the same problem.

One parent, Mohsen, was very critical of the school management; he was a member of the parents’ committee for many years and very aware of the dynamics at CIBS. He described how the management (board of trustees) typically ignored the decisions and recommendations of the parents’ committee, which included many highly educated parents. He was also critical of the quality of teachers:

I noticed two points about teachers in this school. The first thing is that they don’t employ native Western English teachers in spite of (a major) focus on English language skills. The second point is that the quality of the teachers is not like before; they are becoming less effective and not as good as before.

6.4.2 Parents’ choice and cosmopolitanism

CIBS parents, according to Weenink’s (2008) concept of cosmopolitan capital, are considered pragmatic cosmopolitans, rather than dedicated cosmopolitans. They are investing in their children to prepare them to attend Western universities and increase their career opportunities in a globalised age where English language skills and Western degrees are considered essential for a better future (Lowe, 2000). In CIBS, choosing bilingual education for the sake of gaining international qualifications is not the only factor as Islamic values and Arabic identity are also important. For CIBS parents, it is important to balance these factors to reach a desired positional advantage for their children (Waterson, 2015). Therefore, these parents can be considered partial cosmopolitans (Appiah, 2007).

6.5 Curriculum and the school system

As mentioned in Section 5.5, this theme will cover seven categories: (i) curriculum; (ii) school system and bilingual education; (iii) accreditation; (iv) national educational policies; (v) teachers; (vi) students; and (vii) parents.
6.5.1 School system and bilingual education

CIBS was established after the Gulf War and focused mainly on providing a rich Islamic context for bilingual education. According to the HSP for girls, Alana, parents enrol their children in this school primarily because of its Islamic context:

The majority of our parents … want first and foremost Quran and Islamic studies. Without a doubt, they care for everything else but many parents pick us because of that. That might be number one and the other academic issues are number two.

The superintendent, Zainah, summarised the school educational policy by saying, “For our educational policy, we adopted the American curriculum while placing an equal focus on Arabic identity, Islamic values and memorising the Quran.” However, the focus on Islamic studies affected the delivery of, and time available for, other subjects that are vital for students to join specific university courses. This issue was explained by parent Mohsen:

We approached the administration to find a solution for our case but there was no answer or action. I even suggested for them to give only my son in Grade 12 the required science subjects but they also refused. It doesn’t make sense that they teach three Islamic subjects in the last year of high school, (yet) these subjects are not accounted for when they apply to universities.

6.5.2 Curriculum

6.5.2.1 Building students’ Islamic identity

The management and administration of CIBS structure its education processes and activities to protect local culture and build the Islamic identity of the students. In addition to the intensive teaching of Islamic studies and memorising the Quran, another key element of these processes is teaching Islamic life skills, a subject that was developed by the Head of the Board. Norma, a female Grade 12 student, commented on this element, “Life skills is taught in most schools, even government schools, (but) what makes it special in this school is that everything taught in this subject has evidence from Islamic teachings.” The HSP for girls, Alana, also indicated that parents believe in this policy, “I think (parents) trust the head of the board’s vision and they believe in (it).”
6.5.2.2 Curriculum as standards

The curriculum is written in the form of standards. As the curriculum coordinator, Heyam, explained, “It is driven from the standards then to the skills then to the content.” The curriculum is not available online but written and supervised by the curriculum coordinator, who provides every teacher with a copy of his/her subject curriculum. Heyam explained more about the nature of the standards:

Being an international school, we need to be more global, more international and this means we need to follow international standards (but) still as a school we need to keep our own Arabic and Islamic Identity and this doesn’t mean we are away from the international spectrum.

6.5.2.3 Programs and elective subjects

CIBS uses similar English and Arabic curricula that are used in most bilingual international schools in Kuwait. As parent Muhanned pointed out, “For the Arabic curriculum, it’s the same as in the government schools, and the English subjects’ curriculum is similar to (that of) other international schools.” According to many participants, planning and implementing these curricula, especially the English one, are inadequate in many ways, which results in ineffective delivery. Unsatisfied teachers, students and parents have expressed strong disappointment with subjects in English curriculum and its implementation. They also complained that elective subjects offered in CIBS are limited, which limits the opportunity for future university studies for some students.

Tyseer, Head of High School English Department, stated clearly his disappointment of the English curriculum:

Right now, I would say the English curriculum is non-existent. They have many folders and files, all kinds of lesson plan … but there is really no clear-cut, simplified curriculum that everyone can understand and follow.

Concerning the elective subjects, Leena, a female Grade 12 student, suggested that the school should “offer more elective subjects” because the school currently offers “two (electives): French and Media only”. This is seen by some parents as a major weakness
because it affects the future university studies of their children. Parent Mohsen explained this problem:

Not planning to offer a number of scientific subjects to be studied in the high school to enable students (to gain) acceptance in certain fields and degrees at most universities is another issue in this school, where students face many difficulties if they want to apply to universities outside Kuwait. This is what happened with my son because he didn’t study science subjects like chemistry, physics, and biology in the last year of high school. The administration of this school refused to change the subjects in Grade 12 to make it easier for graduate students to be accepted in most Arabic or Western universities.

6.5.2.4 Professional development and curriculum

When CIBS applied to CIS for accreditation, its curriculum depended on outdated teaching methods traditionally used in the Middle East. Teacher, Moh’d, explained, “One of the main areas that CIS paid a lot of attention to was the curriculum. They found that in CIBS, the teaching methods are old and traditional: focused on memorising and teacher-centred.” However, despite being accredited for many years, the school’s learning culture is still dependent on memorising and not critical thinking, as explained by teacher, Tyseer:

In terms of the English language subjects, there are things that are not to be memorised, (but) they are to be analysed, evaluated and so forth. So there seems to be a culture here (where the student prefers to say), ‘Give me a story; I will memorise it and I will answer your questions.’ There is a lack of real critical thinking.

Thus, the school administration expressed the need to deal with this issue, even though it should have been addressed earlier in order to change this outdated culture of teaching and learning. Accordingly, the school employed a local education training company to instruct teachers how to be facilitators so that CIBS students are encouraged to become critical thinkers and independent learners, as explained by the HSP for girls in section 8.6.3.

6.5.2.5 Continuous revising and updating

The curriculum coordinator, Heyam, asserted that CIBS continuously revises and updates their curriculum:
According to curriculum revision, after the curriculum is designed according to my answer in the first question, then there is a regular cycle of curriculum revision. By the end of each year or through the year whenever the teachers analyse the tests and quizzes, they need to analyse them and this should be reflected on the curriculum whether we need to move faster (or slower), repeat (or readdress) a certain part … This is continuous … and by the end of each year, the head of department (sits) with his teachers and revises the curriculum and if they need to do any changes, they refer back to the curriculum coordinator. They provide their point of view for the change they want and if it is approved, they go on.

However, the perspective and experience of the first teacher, Tyseer, Head of the English Department at CIBS, is not in accord with the above statement. He found that “the (current) curriculum … is not very easy to follow.” He started to deal with this issue, but said:

I was hoping to, we were trying to make some changes on the go because … the reading levels of students are very (low), especially on the boys side, so I asked some of the teachers to make those adjustments … to help (students) improve but there’s been great resistance from both teachers and administrators.

Furthermore, students acknowledged improvements in the English curriculum, which was introduced by teacher, Tyseer. They also expressed their approval during the focus group interview. Baker, a male Grade 12 student, said, “The English curriculum was weak and now there is a new head of department and it is improving.”

6.5.3 Curriculum and national educational policies

As mentioned in Section 5.5.3, the MOE enforces a national Arabic curriculum on all bilingual international schools and monitors its implementation to a certain extent. This was confirmed by students, parents, principals and the curriculum coordinator in the CIBS study.

For example, the HSP for girls, Alana, explained that all Arabic subjects are regulated by the MOE. It provides the Arabic curriculum and textbooks, organises visits to schools to observe teaching and learning, and approves mid-term and final examinations. She also
pointed out that the English curriculum is adopted by the school itself without interference from the MOE.

However, the MOE does request the school to review and censor Western curriculum textbooks and materials that has inappropriate content, that is, information that contradicts the local culture and Islamic values. CIBS does this nonetheless. Alana expressed her frustration with the material censorship process, especially because it is not enforced in all international schools in Kuwait:

I know this from my days at another international school specifically and that’s when I learned it first. The ministry does censor the books that we use coming from the US, which is totally unbelievable to me that we have to use a paintbrush and correction pens. So they do that, and I did find out that for the British schools, they don’t censor the books … because they have external exams: IGCSE (International General Certificate of Secondary Education)! So I know from my days at that school that all we need … is just one AP course and we can probably be away from that.

This issue could be organised more effectively by the MOE, especially in cases where international schools are required to avoid teaching specific important, yet controversial, content. Baker, a male Grade 12 student, gave a good example of this matter:

There is a weakness, I don’t know whether it’s from the ministry or not. There are (parts) in some subjects that are (removed from the curriculum) because (the ministry) claims that they are against local culture and society. These are international issues. If I (attend) university, they will teach me the same information and I will (have difficulty) because I did not study it before and I don’t have background (knowledge).

According to teacher, Tayseer, some approved textbooks are unsuitable for students in Kuwait:

This book is beyond the level (of) the students. I have been to Morocco a number of times and visited a couple of American schools there. The students there come up speaking three languages fluently: English, Arabic and French. This sort of textbook will work there because they are quite fluent; they work
very hard. Here, at this time, I think the students would be better served by building the foundation to get here in a couple of years.

6.5.4 Curriculum and accreditation

Accreditation played a positive role in improving the curriculum at CIBS. Superintendent, Zainah, explained that designing a complete curriculum for the first time at CIBS was the result of fulfilling the accreditation requirements:

Designing a specific curriculum is something new to us in this school and it was one requirement of the CIS accreditation. Before, as (do) many international schools in Kuwait, we used to give the teachers the freedom to choose (their) own lesson plans and teaching methods to teach in this school. But at the same time, the students would lose a lot if the teacher wasn’t qualified or competent in designing effective lesson plans and (lacked) effective teaching skills.

This improvement was noticed by parent Mohsen who said, “The curriculum, especially after the school had accreditation, meets the expectations and when you look at the books, you feel that they are well resourced and (this) meets our ambitions.” However, he explained that the curriculum was not delivered effectively because students study only small sections of the textbooks, therefore, depending on the summary provided by their teacher.

This point of view was also confirmed by superintendent, Zainah, who explained, “Implementation of this curriculum in reality (is not fully achieved and) we need more time to practice what’s already planned.” Thus, the accreditation agency played a significant role in helping CIBS to design a fully effective curriculum. However, the fundamental question regarding the reasons behind delays in curriculum implementation in spite of being accredited for more than five years and established for 18 years remains unanswered.

6.5.5 Curriculum and teachers

As mentioned in Section 5.5.5, teachers are the main implementers of the school curriculum and their role is vital in delivering it, as planned and required by the school
administration. Thus, analysing their perspectives is critical in order to understand the nature and delivery of the curriculum in CIBS.

The curriculum coordinator, Heyam, stated that she visits and meets with teachers regularly to ensure proper delivery of the curriculum:

"Part of the curriculum coordinator (job) is visiting the teachers, being able to meet teachers regularly, to check that what is written on paper is actually going on in reality … (and following up) through the visits and meeting the heads and principals when needed."

Ensuring proper delivery is essential, however, other elements are essential to deliver an effective curriculum, including choosing suitable textbooks, providing a variety of resources to choose from, and allowing teachers the freedom to adjust and use what is needed for students. Teachers in CIBS did not see these elements practised in reality, which led to many limitations.

For example, Tyseer, Grade 12 English teacher, pointed out that the curriculum in CIBS is largely textbook oriented, which limits his ability to engage students:

"You have to be able to teach the objectives, meet the standards and teach those skills by using various texts that will help in engaging … your students. This is completely lacking, right now it is very textbook oriented; they are using (one) textbook."

Furthermore, Ahlam, female Grade 12 English teacher, explained that CIBS textbooks are not suitable for all student levels:

"Our textbooks are okay, but they are not excellent. I think that what they need to, work on more in order to suit the different levels of students because eventually when you have a classroom you may have three to four different levels of students and I don’t feel that our textbooks are really suitable for different levels of students."
In addition, CIBS teachers are not permitted to change their lesson plans or teaching methods in order to suit the students. This was stated by Moh’d, Grade 12 physics teacher, “Teachers in (CIBS) have no authority (to choose their own teaching methods and activities); the HOD controls everything and can change anything in your lesson planning.”

6.5.6 Curriculum in the eyes of students and parents

The CIBS students and parents interviewed in this study shared similar views about the school curriculum. They generally expressed positive opinions about the Science and Maths curricula but negative opinions about the English curriculum. They also agreed that only a small portion of the English textbook is taught and that the Grade 12 workload is very light by international standards, which is inappropriate at such an important level of education. Additionally, parents are not well informed of what, how and when certain parts of the curriculum are taught.

For example, Morad, male Grade 12 student, commented on the Science, Maths and English curricula, “In my opinion, the science and math curricula are excellent (but the) English curriculum needs improvement.” Abdelfatah, male Grade 12 student, explained this issue further, as well as the problem of only teaching a small portion of the English curriculum:

The Maths and Science (textbooks) are suitable, but the English textbook is not suitable because it is a big textbook and we study only small parts from it. If (the school administration) makes it easy and just puts the (parts) of the curriculum that we will study, it will make it easy on the teacher, the students and also the school (because) they don’t have to pay for the whole textbook.

In addition to that, Mohsen, parent of a Grade 12 student, complained of not being made aware of the weekly and yearly curriculum plans because information is not available for parents:

There is the issue of not knowing exactly what they have to study and prepare in advance. It is also useful for parents to know what parts of the curriculum they have to study so they can supervise their children and help them. In reality, what happened is that none of the parents have any idea of what or
when the students are going to study certain parts of these textbooks. Sometimes one textbook is used for many years and no information (is given) about how the lessons and chapters are chosen. These textbooks are valuable but not used as I wished (them) to be used.

Mohsen added another important point about the low workload and limited amount of academic knowledge that students gain in Grade 12:

The other point I want to mention here is about Grade 12 students. Once they start Grade 12, they behave (as if) they already graduated and finished high school. The amount of work and effort they put in Grade 12 is the minimum. Comparing it to our days, we used to work and study very hard and revise the curriculum many times. The amount of lessons they study and the academic knowledge they acquire in this year is very weak and it is an important point that the school should deal with.

6.6 National educational policies

As mentioned in Section 5.6, this theme directly answers the fourth supporting research question, which revolves around MOE policies for international schools in Kuwait. Furthermore, after a general analysis of the collected data, all international schools were found to act independently concerning major educational policies, that is, without accountability or evaluation by the MOE.

The major categories that were analysed in the CBS case study is also analysed here for CIBS. These categories are the rules and regulations of Kuwait’s MOE in relation to curriculum, teacher qualifications, academic performance and government scholarships.

6.6.1 Curriculum ministry policies

As mentioned in Section 5.6.1, the MOE does not have specific regulations and policies regarding Western curricula taught in international schools in Kuwait. However, the Ministry has full control over the curricula of Arabic subjects in these schools.

This issue was confirmed by the curriculum coordinator, HSPs and high school teachers in CIBS. Taha, the HSP for boys, stated:
Public schools obviously are locked with the government (MOE); private schools have more say when it comes to the curriculum … The MOE have a lot of say in many issues related to (Arabic) subjects to the point that the quarterly, half yearly and annual plans come from the ministry, which actually sends somebody to observe the teachers and check on what they are doing. For subjects other than Arabic, the school has a lot of say in choosing its own curriculum.

The only regulation that the MOE has in place in regarding Western curricula in these schools is material censorship to avoid any content that may be against Islamic principles and local culture. Superintendent, Zainah, said, “We always censor the books (in response to this directive). There is a committee at the school library working mainly on censoring the textbooks used in this school.”

6.6.2 Teacher’s qualification requirements

As mentioned in Section 5.6.2, the MOE recently introduced new regulations to ensure that international schools employ qualified teachers. The HSP for girls, Alana, confirmed this issue and explained the situation of teachers in international schools before these regulations were introduced:

This year has been totally different (regarding teacher employment at CIBS) … and this may also be related to the ministry… sort of ‘stepping up’ to improve who the school brings in. Definitely they are looking at degrees predominantly from the West, (but) I don’t think that’s from the ministry, that’s … from the school. They are very interested in that, not just the degrees but (if) they actually hold a teaching certificate or license. Because here in Kuwait, previously a pharmacist could be employed as a chemistry teacher (or) an engineer as a physics teacher, but those people … did not have educational courses or certificates.

6.6.3 Monitoring academic performance

As mentioned in Section 5.6.3, the MOE has no system or policies to monitor the academic performance of students in international schools in Kuwait. The Ministry does not require them to organise their students to sit for international or national standardised tests. However, it does monitor Arabic assessment by approving the examinations designed by
the school, as superintendent, Zainah, confirmed, “For the Arabic subjects, the school designs the exams but the MOE gives its approval.”

Taha, the HSP for boys, also confirmed this issue:

For assessment, the (MOE) only interferes with Arabic subjects (but not the English subjects). There are some situations where they could interfere if they receive a complaint from, for example, a parent about some … test that is not fair (because) the students were not taught the material or the integrity was compromised.

Alana, the HSP for girls, stated clearly, “The Ministry of Education doesn’t interfere in setting the policies or following certain standards for the English subjects, or choosing a certain curriculum.”

6.6.4 Government scholarships

As mentioned in Section 5.6.4, the government of Kuwait provides many scholarships for its students to study in Kuwait or abroad. Students from government and international schools compete to obtain these scholarships, especially higher level bursaries. Accordingly, students strive to obtain high results in their GPA in order to allow for greater choice in achieving their goals. However, not all schools have the facility for their students to sit international standardised tests or international assessment programs, such as the IB or AP courses. Thus, there is no single standard or measurement that international schools can use to allow students to be equally assessed and examined.

CIBS is one international school that designs and uses their own tests and examinations to assess their students who are not prepared to sit for international standardised tests. This was confirmed by the HSP for girls, Alana:

It is better and we should try to organise some … external exams for our students. We are not there yet. My first year here, we did an IOWA test but only for one grade level. It didn’t go that well, and then for whatever reasons, the management said, ‘We are not going to do that again just yet,’ so we didn’t
do the IOWA. Last year, we were looking at MAP, but still we haven’t done anything there yet.

Alana continued to explain how the school attempts “to provide the students with the best chance of success” by not scheduling more than one test a day. She disagreed with this policy, “We have an unwritten policy of only one test per a day and my personal, professional opinion is that they need more than that.”

6.6.5 National educational policies and education quality assurance

In Kuwait, the MOE is responsible for shaping and managing the education system, including international schools. This responsibility includes imposing expectations that international schools must comply with (Vanhoof & Van Petegem, 2007). The MOE must have a monitoring system in place to observe the quality of education in international schools in Kuwait, and these schools must render account (Vanhoof & Van Petegem, 2007). However, according to CIBS participants’ perspectives, the MOE has no such monitoring system and does not have policies to evaluate these schools. Instead, this responsibility was given indirectly to international accreditation agencies, such as CIS and MSA. In doing so, the MOE is strengthening neoliberalism forces in Kuwait (Baltodano, 2012) as international accreditation agency powers are increasing over educational institutions in Kuwait.

In the case of CIBS, the limited role of MOE policies in monitoring and evaluating international schools in Kuwait did not, according to participants’ responses, aid in achieving the expectations of stakeholders and society. CIBS participants were not satisfied with the level of education in this school.

6.7 Accreditation and its policies

As explained in Section 5.7, international school accreditation, which is undertaken by international agencies, such as CIS, is compulsory in Kuwait. This theme is a key element of this research as it answers the third supporting question, and it is also a vital area of research for international schools in Kuwait and globally. All participants involved in these
schools and this study, excluding students, were asked about their perspective of CIS accreditation issues. The five categories used in the CBS case study (Chapter Five) to explain this theme and answer the third supporting question were also used for the CIBS case study. These categories emphasise the importance of (i) accreditation; (ii) accreditation process and its efficiency; (iiu) effect of accreditation on curriculum; (iv) assessment; and (v) teachers.

6.7.1 Accreditation importance

After being established in 1996, CIBS finally gained CIS accreditation 12 years later in 2008. It was important for this school to become accredited because, in addition to accreditation made compulsory by the MOE, it was the first Islamic bilingual international school in Kuwait; the pursuit of international accreditation was a new and unfamiliar experience for a school offering a strong Islamic education.

The importance of this was described by the accreditation coordinator, Salma, “Accreditation is linked to development.”

The superintendent, Zainah, explained further:

For CIS, we have improved noticeably. The progress we achieved is distinguished because the process of self-evaluation and the recommendations (in their) report … are very helpful in accelerating our success and pinpointing effective areas (for) progress.

Furthermore, the HSP for girls, Alana, linked the importance of accreditation to the progression of students to universities:

I know that CIS is very strong and a good stamp of approval. It is accepted in the US and I guess MSA is one of the accredited organisations also under or co-joint with CIS. (Accreditation) makes a difference when the students graduate as to where they can or cannot go, it is extremely important.

The chairperson, Nisreen, agreed with these perspectives but argued that accreditation could not add more to the reputation of the school because it was already well-known and
was well respected in the community. When asked if accreditation had any effect on the school’s reputation, she replied:

Locally, not really because already our school is well-known and has a good name, but it affected us internally (by helping) us to improve and develop. The international accreditation organisation is good because it pinpoints weaknesses and areas that need to be dealt with and improved, so this is good for us as a school.

6.7.2 Accreditation process and its efficiency

The accreditation process and procedures for CIBS were similar to CBS because they were both accredited by CIS. The accreditation coordinator, Salma, explained the accreditation process in detail:

First, we apply for membership and when they approve this application, they send a team of accreditation officers, depending on the size of the school. They sent us a female officer to check the school. She observed the school in detail: the curriculum, students, facilities, teacher numbers and their qualifications. These were the main issues … After that, if she was (satisfied) with all (this), she gave her approval to … start the self-study … We completed (and returned) a self-study report within a two-year period … The self-study report was based on the evaluation report, standards and criteria (given to) us after the first visit, and the evidence (of our findings) will also be included. Two months after submitting the report, they informed us that they would send a team of 13 officers. When they came to the school, they spread in different directions to check our report findings and the evidence we provided (to assess) whether they matched the reality and practice of the school (in the) classes. They checked the validity of the report and they evaluated all these things and sent us the CIS report after two months.

Salma continued to explain the accreditation team members’ role in these visits and how they are able to evaluate a school in a short time:

The (goal) is to have a general idea about certain issues. For example, when I visited classes (as an accreditation officer assessing another school), within a short time I had an idea whether they used differentiation in their classrooms or not. So in this way, CIS can form a general idea about the school and decide on the evaluation results. The leader and deputy leader of the CIS team visit classes and departments at a school, but they direct their team members …
where to go, how to observe and what to check for. The team members’ role is to gather information from different departments and classes and provide the team leader with this information. The (team) leader and deputy focus on the administration such as finance and others.

Salma described the process in more detail, including the duration and timing of each accreditation cycle, which is a continual process:

Every five years, they visit and report on our school. Last visit, they checked whether we followed and implemented their recommendations or not. At the end of each visit, they provide us with a report of what we achieved and what we have to do … Every 10 years, we have to (repeat) the self-study. It took us five years to get (our initial) accreditation.

Despite the continuous effort and seemingly endless preparation needed, including drafting reports and organising visits, the chairperson, Nisreen, was satisfied with the results and commented on this issue and the budget:

(The cost) was just within the possible budget … I would say that we benefited from (accreditation) because CIS acts as an outside observer or auditor to … inform us of our strong points and report (on) the weak areas that should be dealt with.

### 6.7.3 Accreditation effect on curriculum

As mentioned in Section 5.7.3, the accreditation agency considers the curriculum as a major area that should be concise and designed according to set standards. In CIBS, the accreditation agency, CIS, played a major role in directing the school to design a clear suitable curriculum. The superintendent, Zainah, explained:

When we started working with CIS on our accreditation, they requested (that we) design a clear, stable curriculum, mapping each stage horizontally and vertically. In this way, whenever a new teacher comes to this school, he will find a complete curriculum and have clear structure to follow. He can use his own teaching skills to be creative and he has the freedom to choose a suitable teaching method for that purpose. This is one of the requirements of the CIS accreditation process.
CIS does not dictate or ask a school to adopt a specific curriculum; rather, it requires the school to present clear, written and documented curricula. As the accreditation coordinator, Salma, explained:

   Regarding the curriculum, the CIS doesn’t raise or dictate any specific issue in the sense of requiring a certain curriculum as different schools have different curricula. For example, we have an American diploma curriculum. They don’t comment on the choice of curriculum but require the school to have clear, written and documented curricula for them to check.

However, the CIS committee raised the issue of music not being taught at CIBS. Salma said, “(We) discussed it with them and explained that it is against the values of this school to teach music.”

A key curriculum area that CIS focuses on is its teaching methods. They found that CIBS teachers use outdated teacher-centred methods, as Moh’d, a former Grade 12 physics teacher at CIBS, explained, “One of the main areas that CIS pays a lot of attention to is the curriculum. They found that at (CIBS), the teaching methods are old and traditional, which focus on memorising and being teacher-centred.” This matter was confirmed by the accreditation coordinator, Salma, who explained how CIS advised them to deal with this issue:

   The learning process of the students is very important (to CIS). They also (analyse) PD and teaching methods in the school. They questioned the traditional teaching methods of our teachers. (They required) us to start (using) differentiation … and train our teachers on these techniques via PD programs.

With a similar perspective to the CBS case study, Salma stated that the CIS committee insisted that the CIBS guidance statement, which includes its mission statement and philosophy, should be applied at all stages throughout the school:

   They focus on the guidance statement of the school, which includes the mission statement, philosophy, objectives and vision of the school. (They want to know) whether they are really applied by the school and are known by the teachers, students, staff, parents, and the whole community.
6.7.4 Accreditation effect on assessment

As mentioned in Section 5.7.4, assessment is a critical issue in this research because it measures the quality of education in international schools in Kuwait. As evident in the analysis below, the assessment system used in CIBS is traditional and no international standardised tests are organised for its students despite the school being accredited for six years.

The accreditation coordinator, Salma, was clear about the issue of assessment in CIBS, and explained how the CIS committee criticised the school’s assessment tasks:

They stated in their report that our exams are mostly traditional and structured to serve content … CIS prefers assessments structured to test skills. They also raised the issue of the grading policy and the distribution of marks.

She indicated that the committee instructed the school to organise international standardised tests for its students. This was confirmed by the HSP for girls, Alana, as quoted in Section 6.6.4, who mentioned that the school did this once for one grade, but then it was abandoned.

However, since external international testing is recommended but not compulsory for accreditation by CIS, schools such as CIBS would not take it seriously because, on one hand, it is an extra burden on the school to prepare students for such tests, and on the other hand, the school would be graded at a low level in these tests if student results were not satisfactory. The accreditation coordinator, Salma, clarified that CIS does not require the CIBS to organise external examinations:

They did not force us to organise these exams … but they advised us that it is better for the school if international standardised tests were organised for the students. Nothing is forceful and (it’s not) obligatory to follow certain policies … CIS just (makes) suggestions and advises.

An important issue to raise here is the monitoring of academic performances of students by CIS, as Salma explained:
They check (a small) random sample of report cards … (that includes all grades from) elementary to high school. They compare the report cards for certain students; they analyse their grades to see if they are similar, increasing or decreasing … Generally, they don’t interfere in the content of the exams but they ask teachers when they visit classes about the kinds of assessment teachers design and use.

The above explanation prompts the question: *Is it enough to monitor a student’s academic performance by following such procedures, or is it just ensuring that there is a system in place for student records and results?*

### 6.7.5 Accreditation effect on teachers

Undoubtedly, teachers play a major role in ensuring the quality of education in schools, particularly in international schools in Kuwait because employing Western-qualified teachers is not a simple process, and generally their length of stay is limited. Many schools, including accredited schools, resort to employing unqualified teachers, even after the MOE restricted regulations, which negatively affected the education process. According to the analysis in below, CIBS is lacking in this area as most of their teachers have bachelor degrees without teaching certificates; despite the school having been accredited since 8 years, the issue is still unresolved.

Regarding this issue, the accreditation coordinator, Salma, stated clearly that the CIS committee “checked (teachers’) qualifications and recommended that most of them should have a teaching certificate. Most of our teachers had only bachelor degrees without teaching certificates.” She continued to explain that “for the principals, there were no comments or recommendations for them. They didn’t raise any issue regarding their degrees or qualifications”. However, most of their administration did not have proper qualifications or training to hold governance positions. Therefore, teacher and administrator qualifications will be reviewed again in Section 8.4.5 when analysing the CIS official interview to reach an understanding of this issue.

When Salma was asked whether the CIS committee would evaluate the pay scale of salaries and report it to prompt the school to take action, she replied:
They check the salaries and if they are low they suggest increasing the salaries. They don’t compare with other schools but they check the general trend of employee salaries … When (the CIS committee) visited us the first time, they recommended to fix the salaries because we didn’t have one pay scale.

Although this suggestion was reported by the CIS committee during the first visit, CBIS still had no pay scale at the time of data collection, which is six years after being accredited. They tried to introduce one pay scale for recently employed qualified teachers, which differed from teachers recruited previously, but due to management restrictions and other reasons, this plan was not fully implemented.

Generally, the salaries of English subject teachers at CIBS are not competitive with other international schools in Kuwait, which is why they predominantly employ teachers of Arabic background who graduated from Arabic universities to teach English language based subjects, that is, English, Maths and Science. This was confirmed by one parent, Mohsen (Section 6.3.3) when he explained that CIBS charges high fees but do not employ qualified teachers like other reputable international schools in Kuwait.

Regarding the issue of PD for teachers in this school, the accreditation committee had previously pointed out the inefficiency of CIBS’s PD program and suggested it to be improved. The accreditation coordinator, Salma, stated:

At that time, we were at the start of our PD programs and the delivery was not up to standard, so when (the CIS committee) checked every point that is related to a standard, they requested PD related to it. Due to that … I am planning to improve the PD program.

Furthermore, the PD coordinator, Heyam, explained how the CIS accreditation committee values PD programs:

We wanted to work according to the CIS accreditation recommendations. It is compulsory, according to CIS, to have a PD program, and you need to have a budget for it. You need to have a plan for it and check its delivery and effect on the students.
6.7.6 Accreditation connection to neoliberalism and cosmopolitanism

International accreditation is considered one of the major forces of neoliberalism that ensures the quality of education in international schools and increases the marketing of these schools (Baltodano, 2012). International accreditation agencies, such as CIS and NEASC, focus on global citizenship, and they are part of the pragmatic current of international education (Keller, 2015). According to CIBS participant comments, CIBS students showed awareness of other cultures around the world due to their curriculum and textbooks. However, development of their intercultural understanding and associated ideological values is still limited because the majority of the student population (over 90%) is Kuwaiti, and CIBS staff are mostly from Arabic backgrounds with a similar culture to the students.

6.8 Quality of education

As mentioned in Section 5.8, the effectiveness interpretation analytical approach will be used to measure the quality of education in the schools being studied, where quality depends on judging the input and process indicators and their effect on the outcome indicators. The eight main areas of focus and analysis in this theme are: (i) student behaviour; (ii) teachers; (iii) (academic) administration; (iv) management; (v) staff qualifications and experience; (vi) orientation and PD programs; (vii) education quality drivers; and (viii) academic achievement (performance).

6.8.1 Student behaviour

Problematic student behaviour exists in this school, as Tyseer, Head of the English Department, explained:

I don’t want to generalise but … (about) half the students are … difficult and have poor behavior … they are poorly behaved and disrespectful, especially to teachers and administrators. I didn’t expect that, especially as the school program is (emphasising) the Arabic and Islamic culture. (However) teachers and students from Grade 6 to Grade 12 will challenge you on the spot, challenge your authority … It is very disrespectful.
This attitude from the students, according to the former Science teacher, Moh’d, who taught for eight years in CIBS, is the result of an ineffective administration of CIBS:

In (CIBS), as I mentioned earlier, the administration was ineffective and that affected the students and their relationships between themselves and also with the teachers. They (students) consider themselves (as having) a higher status than teachers, and consider the teachers as employees of them who are paid by their parents to teach them. This attitude was clear for the teachers. Some teachers didn’t like it; they resisted such behavior and showed resilience in dealing with them, but at the same time, other teachers accepted this attitude from the students and tried to please them and their parents by any means.

Therefore, student behaviour in this case study is a major obstacle to improving learning and achieving good outcomes. Moh’d confirmed this point:

Most of the students (at CIBS) feel that they can earn the required marks by different ways other than the normal way. Many of them chose ways like getting a private tutor who knows the system in this school or manipulating the teacher to get the exam questions (before the exam) to achieve high marks, which they find easier than studying and depending on themselves. Only 10 - 15% of the students in CIBS behave and work hard to achieve their goals. This is really sad and disappointing … From each class of 20 students … only two or three students are serious about their study and behaves properly.

### 6.8.2 Teachers

CIBS teachers are distinguished due to their familiarity of the local culture and respect for Islamic values. Having these qualities is essential for CIBS teachers as they are part of the school’s mission and reputation, which is why parents prefer CIBS above other international schools. Parent Muhanned said, “The best thing about this school is the teachers … I noticed the administration works hard to choose the most suitable staff that suit our culture.”

However, CIBS teachers face difficulties that directly affect their ability to function professionally, one of which is an unsupportive administration. Teachers are not supported by the administration when challenged by students or parents. Tyseer, Head of the English Department, said:
My understanding is that there is very little support; when we talk about the administration I (mean) principals and vice principals. At the middle and high school, at least on the boys side … I haven’t heard any complaints from old teachers, (but) I have a number of new teachers … saying, ‘My administrator is not supporting my actions.’ They don’t agree with what I am doing and they are supporting the students … and parents. They are not giving me the tools and the reasons that I need; they are not supporting my decisions.

Another difficulty facing teachers at CBIS is the workload, in particular, the extra work placed on committees teachers to produce compulsory PD programs, as explained by Ahlam, a high school English teacher:

‘We have a lot of committees now … a lot of (work) for accreditation … and projects … Teachers are not just focused on teaching … they are all over the place … maybe this … affects teaching generally because you are not fully focused on the students.’

Another obstacle for teachers in CIBS is the lack of control over their lesson planning and teaching methodology. The Physics teacher, Moh’d, stated clearly that “teachers in (CIBS) have no authority; the HOD controls everything and can change anything in the lesson plan”.

Teacher productivity and continuity at CIBS is affected by the inequality of teacher salaries and allowances. Moh’d explained, “Salaries and allowances are different according to nationality and background, and there is no clear pay scale available for staff to see.”

6.8.3 Academic administration

CIBS academic administration mainly consists of the superintendent and principals. The central role is the superintendent, who acts as a representative for the board of trustees. The principals’ role is limited to implementing policies designed by the board and superintendent, and they have insufficient control over their own departments. Parent Mohsen was critical of this issue:

‘I often dealt with administration and principals. The previous high school principal was gentle, humble and easy to contact but I felt that he was not
independent or a decision maker … He was only implementing decisions issued by the board and superintendent.

The HSP for girls, Alana, also mentioned that she is not involved in recruiting her own teachers:

At my previous school, I was more involved than I have been here … Until most recently, I wasn’t involved. Maybe two years ago, the only involvement I had … was simply (being) involved in two interviews (because) someone wasn’t available to interview.

The CIBS management generally employed local principals from an Arabic background with Arabic qualifications, which are not suitable for an international school. However, during the year of data collection (2014), CIBS employed principals with Western qualifications but they did not continue working at CIBS, so administration returned to its previous recruitment policy. The Head of the English Department, Tyseer, commented on the staff of CIBS, including administrators:

I don’t think they have the right people in the right place … There are way too many people … too many positions, too many chefs in the kitchen … You can do a better job with fewer people (by employing) world-trained, educated people in the field, in (the right) area. It starts from curriculum design, from everything, to your administrators and of course your teachers.

The administration’s support for its teachers in this school, especially regarding students who misbehave, is limited, resulting in teachers being put in a vulnerable position. The Physics teacher, Moh’d, was very critical of this matter:

The problem with CIBS is that their system doesn’t … support the teacher in cases … of students misbehaving … Teachers were put in difficult situations … They were forced to seek the help of other teachers who have a strong personality and are well respected by students because there was no administration present in such situations where classroom management and student discipline was needed.
6.8.4 Management

As mentioned in Section 5.8.4, the term ‘management’ refers to the school board, who oversees all matters related to school management and governance. The CIBS board consists of the same board members who established the school. The Head of the Board takes on a central role in managing the school and giving it a conservative Islamic status due to her active involvement in the community and Kuwait. Parent Abu-Sakeb confirmed, “Regarding the administration and the leadership of the Head of the Board, we value Nisreen’s substantial efforts to preserve the Islamic values and education of our children.”

However, in spite of the same board members remaining in full control of decisions taken at the school for many years, their identities are not known by most parents, as Mohsen, a parent and parent committee member, explained, “Many functions and activities happened in the school but I didn’t see any member of the board. I don’t know who the members are, so I (cannot) recognise them.” Furthermore, Mohsen was disappointed with the CIBS board because they were not cooperative and did not effectively deal with suggestions and decisions of the parents committee, as he explained in Section 6.8.3.

According to the points discussed above, it is clear that there was no transparency regarding the role and authority of CIBS management regardless of claiming to be a non-profit school. According to my knowledge of the school, having worked there and formed many friendships, some of whom are still working there for many years and related to the Head of the Board, CIBS has kept the same circle of board members since it was established; only close people know who designs policies and makes decisions at the highest level.

6.8.5 Staff qualifications and experience

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, most staff members at CIBS are from an Arabic background with qualifications gained from Arabic universities. Despite the experience they have gained in their field of study, they lack teaching certificates or education degrees. Native English-speaking teachers in this school are in the minority despite CIBS being a bilingual international school. The administration recruited more than 35 qualified Western
native English-speaking teachers in the year of data collection but failed to retain 30 of them; most transferred to other international schools in Kuwait or the Gulf.

For example, the curriculum coordinator is Egyptian and her degrees are from Arabic universities, which are not suitable for international schools because the Western pedagogies and teaching skills are, generally, not taught and delivered in recognised training programs. She mentioned her qualifications:

I have a BA in English language and an MA in collaborative leadership. I’ve worked through all the education system … as a teacher, HOD, then curriculum coordinator and PD planner. I am a member in the strategic planning team (for) many accreditation visits … I’ve worked in universities as a lecturer and in this school.

In contrast, one of the few Western native English speakers, who has been working at CIBS for many years, is the HSP for girls. Alana is American and has many years of experience:

I am the principal of the girls’ middle and high school … My bachelor degree in science and education is from the University of Western Louisiana in the US. This is (my) only degree … but I am hoping on October 14th (to begin my) master’s program. I have 34 years’ experience and 17 (years) here in Kuwait: 10 in one school, seven in this school.

6.8.6 Orientation and professional development programs

As discussed in Section 5.8.6, PD programs have a direct link to improving a student’s learning and increasing his/her quality of education. However, not all international schools in Kuwait are willing to assign the necessary budget to introduce proper PD programs due to their cost and poor judgement of the value of PD by unqualified administrators.

CIBS is one school that did not implement effective PD programs before applying for accreditation. The PD coordinator, Heyam, confirmed:

We started PD four or five years ago in something called ‘cycles’; each teacher should have four to six issues and chooses one or two issues to research (for self-development). Then they go through … ‘learning
communities’ (where) they exchange information, then mentor, rotate and so on.

She explained that CIBS replaced these ineffective programs by planning new PD programs, in accordance with CIS committee recommendations:

Then we stopped (cycles and learning communities) because we wanted to work according to CIS accreditation recommendations. According to CIS, PD programs are compulsory. (The school) needs to budget and plan (in addition to) checking the delivery and effect of (PD) on the students.

However, at the time of collecting the data, the PD programs still did not function effectively as the Head of the High School English Department, Tyseer, stated:

We’ve had one PD so far, and … in the first week (during) orientation we had a whole bunch of … workshops, PDs. They are useless! Teachers from the West are well trained, more experienced, (having taught) for many years. How to turn a computer on and off, how to use a memory stick! Our last PD … we had to come in on our day off, which makes no sense … You don’t pay me to come on my day off … and that PD was geared towards using Microsoft and Word; these are things we should already know.

This situation was unexpected, especially as CIBS had been accredited for six years at the time of collecting the data. Many teachers and staff confirmed their disappointment with the low level attention and budget given to PD. The Physics high school teacher, Moh’d, explained the reasons behind this attitude, “Professional development at (CIBS) is (considered) a liability … If a teacher tries to improve himself and asks the school for PD, he may lose his job.”

6.8.7 Education quality drivers

At CIBS, good quality international education is limited. Although the school can be considered to be succeeding in protecting the identity and local values of the students by focusing on Arabic and Islamic studies subjects, they can also be seen as having limited achievements in international education subjects and the acquisition of English language skills.
One parent, Mohsen, summarised his disappointment:

To a certain extent, there was success … in (protecting identity), but in the direction of quality education I was expecting much (more) success whether in scientific subjects or in acquiring English language skills. The resources and facilities available in (CIBS) were very limited compared to other international schools and that’s why the English language skills of my sons, especially speaking and fluency, were much (lower) than I expected.

A similar point of view was expressed by the HSP for boys, Taha:

Here in (CIBS), it (English language skills) is really weak. Last week, I was observing the English lesson of one of the top classes and I found a huge difference between the students here and (my previous) school in the academic performance. Even in conversation skills, there is a huge difference between the students here and my previous school’s students. They haven’t practiced before, (but) now they practice more. The foundation (in writing) is so weak; it’s a general school problem.

Furthermore, when comparing quality education drivers of CBS with CBIS, the following findings were revealed:

Firstly, regarding the non-profit policy, CIBS claims to implement this policy. However, in reality, profits are not reinvested to improve the school; they go to a charity organisation. The Physics teacher, Murad, questioned this issue, “They have a lot of money and it is a non-profit school, so I don’t know where the money is going. Teachers’ salaries are very low and there is no expenditure on buildings or new construction.”

Secondly, parents’ involvement in their children’s education is neither active or encouraged. This is because of the uncooperative and secretive behaviour of the board of trustees towards the parents’ committee. Parent Mohsen mentioned this repeatedly during his interview, “I don’t know who makes school policy … (When) I was a member in the parents’ committee for four years, we didn’t see or meet the board members.”

Thirdly, for quality indicators of education, the school does not support their graduates’ achievements in relation to those of reputable Western universities as most of them need to
study a foundation year if they are to enter specific courses directly. Rather, it compares and contrasts locally with government universities with graduates from government schools, as parent Muhanned expressed, “We can see from the good results our students achieve when they participate in local … competition, so I can say this could be as a scale.”

Furthermore, the management looks seriously at the students waiting list as a sign of being a good school, despite most international schools maintaining long waiting lists for students who wish to join these schools. The chairperson, Nisreen, commented, “(A long waiting list) is a good sign. Parents put their kids on the waiting list and wait three years to join the school.”

6.8.8 Academic achievement

As mentioned in Section 5.8.8, the academic achievement of students in these schools are measured in this study according to shared expectations of most parents, which relate to the development of fluent English language skills and for the school to function properly by international standards in order to prepare students to enter Western universities.

Regarding English language skills, CIBS students are generally weak in the English language, as Physics teacher, Moh’d, indicated:

> The acquisition of English language skills is very weak at (CIBS) because the administration doesn’t plan to deal with this issue by employing qualified native English language teachers. Additionally, no academic administrator stays more than three years at (CIBS) and accordingly there is no stability in overall academic administration and educational policies, so there are no productive results.

In addition, students were not well prepared to enter Western universities directly without undertaking preparation courses or a foundation year. This matter was experienced by parent Mohsen who faced many difficulties finding a suitable university for his son. He said, “(At the) last exhibition for UK universities conducted in Kuwait, they told us that if students from this school don’t have AP exams, they should study a foundation year before starting their university degree.”
6.8.9 Educational quality assurance concept

In relation to the quality of education, CIBS interviews were analysed using Cheng’s (2003) concept of quality assurance. This analysis approaches the quality of education in connection to internal, interface and future quality assurance elements. Regarding the internal quality assurance of education in CIBS, participants’ perspectives indicated that student academic achievements, which are linked in this study to excellent English language skills and being fully prepared to attend Western universities, were below expectation.

For the interface quality assurance of education in CIBS, it was observed from participant comments that CIBS parent involvement was restricted and their recommendations were ignored by management. Moreover, the quality of students, teachers, administration and management had a negative effect on the quality of education in this school. CIBS students, as observed when meeting with them and according to comments from other interviewees, challenged their teachers, causing distraction to the learning process in class. The majority of teachers and academic administration in CIBS, as stated by many participants, are not qualified to teach in international schools, therefore, the quality of education is lowered in this school. The CIBS Board of Trustees (management), as shown in the analysis, consists of members who are not qualified to manage this type of school. Another quality indicator of interface quality assurance in education is the continuous improvement of staff and practices (Cheng, 2003). In CIBS, the analysis above shows that the school lacks clarity in providing appropriate PD programs that fulfil the needs of its staff members, which accordingly affects education quality in this school.

For future quality assurance of education, the analysis in the CIBS case study is conducted in connection to the individualisation, localisation and globalisation of education (Cheng, 2003). Regarding the individualisation of education, it was found, according to the participant comments, that this element of quality education was not implemented in CIBS because teaching and learning in this school mostly uses a traditional teacher-centred approach. Students at CIBS are not independent learners and have limited skills and
methods in their learning. In relation to localised and globalised learning, CIBS students experience localised learning because they are taught the local Arabic curriculum. The delivery of this curriculum, according to the analysis above, is considered to be of a high level in Kuwait. In contrast, the delivery of an international (American) curriculum is considered to be substandard and inefficient, which negatively affects globalised learning in CIBS.

6.9 Conclusion

In the case study of CIBS, the school represents a model of a conservative Islamic school in Kuwait. Its strong Arabic and Islamic studies curricula are preferred by many families in Kuwait. However, the school requires improvement in the English language and international education curricula. It has the resources and facilities needed to produce a high standard of education, but due to the unqualified management team, many important areas lack efficiency.

CIBS was established to protect Arabic identity and Islamic values, a feature that attracted many Kuwaiti families who chose to send their children to a more conservative school. Parents and students interviewed at CIBS were happy with the friendly Islamic environment but were critical of its low standard of international education and ineffective school system. Chapter Six shows that CIBS functions below its potential despite having been accredited for six years. This is partly due to insufficient valuation or fulfilment of the recommendations by the accreditation committee. In addition, no independent authority, such as the MOE, monitored the academic performance at CIBS despite approving the results and certificates of CIBS students.

Many factors affected the quality of education in CIBS negatively. Firstly, the behaviour of CIBS students was challenging for teachers because there was no disciplinary policy to deal with such problems. Secondly, CIBS needed to employ highly qualified and experienced teachers and administrators. Board members were not active, cooperative or transparent, and parents were not permitted to be involved in the school. There was no proper planning
to achieve expected outcomes. Furthermore, the orientation and PD programs in CIBS were substandard and required considerably planning, as well as an increased budget to achieve what was recommended by the CIS accreditation committee. As a result, the academic achievement of CIBS students and the school’s standard of education are not encouraging.
Chapter Seven: Case Study – Inclusion Bilingual School (IBS)

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, Inclusion Bilingual School (IBS) is investigated to form the third and final case study in this research. The same six core themes used in the CBS and CIBS case studies will be used for IBS, namely: (i) history and rapid growth; (ii) parents’ choice and satisfaction; (iii) curriculum and the school system; (iv) national educational policies; (v) accreditation and its policies; and (vi) quality of education. These themes directly or indirectly relate to the research questions and are constructed through coding and analysing the data gathered from interviewing eight different types of participants involved in the education process at IBS: (i) four parents; (ii) seven students; (iii) two high school English teachers; (iv) accreditation; (v) PD coordinator; (vi) curriculum coordinator; (vii) HSP and acting director of the school; and (viii) Head of the Board. Of 18 participants interviewed in IBS, seven were females and 11 were males. There was one student focus group interview that included seven male students. No female students participated in the focus group interview because it was conducted outside the school; the girls’ parents did not allow them to attend for cultural reasons. The remaining participants (four males and seven females) were interviewed individually. Tables 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3 show details of each participant in IBS. The names of all schools and interviewees are pseudonyms.

Table 7.1  IBS Participant Classification Sheet – Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Native Speaker of English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clare</td>
<td>Head of English Department</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Postgraduate degree</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King</td>
<td>Grade 12 English teacher</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>Bachelor degree</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne</td>
<td>High school counsellor</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>South African</td>
<td>Postgraduate degree</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asera</td>
<td>Accreditation and PD coordinator</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Postgraduate degree</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

207
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Native Speaker of English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faten</td>
<td>Curriculum coordinator</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>South African</td>
<td>Bachelor degree</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salam</td>
<td>High school principal and director</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Jordanian</td>
<td>Postgraduate degree</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiba</td>
<td>Chairperson</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>Postgraduate degree</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 7.2  IBS Participant Classification Sheet – Parents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yaser</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>Bachelor degree</td>
<td>Working as a consultant in his field in one of the ministries of justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdelrahim</td>
<td>Bank manager</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Syrian</td>
<td>Bachelor of Commerce</td>
<td>Retired and previous member of the parents’ committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samer</td>
<td>Police officer</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>Bachelor degree</td>
<td>Lived in the UK with his children for many years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mona</td>
<td>surgeon</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>Bachelor of Medicine (USA)</td>
<td>Lived in the Saudi Arabia and put her daughter in bilingual school there.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 7.3  IBS Participant Classification Sheet – Students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suhail</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AbdelMalek</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Syrian</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durgam</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aabed</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yusri</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Jordanian</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yazeed</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Jordanian</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ameen</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kuwaiti</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.2 School profile

Table 7.4 shows IBS school information as shown on the school website and according to participant responses to questions.

### Table 7.4  IBS school information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum and School System</th>
<th>Bilingual school: local Arabic curriculum and American curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>Owned by private investment company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ Background</td>
<td>The majority (more than 95%) of parents are Kuwaitis from educated and financially comfortable families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Staff</td>
<td>481 staff members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Students</td>
<td>2481 students from K-12, including males, females and special needs students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ Nationalities</td>
<td>English Curriculum Subjects: The majority are native English speakers from Western countries: USA, Canada, Australia and South Africa. Arabic Curriculum Subjects: native Arabic speakers from Arabic countries (Egyptians, Palestinians, Syrians)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Qualifications</td>
<td>The majority of English subject teachers are qualified but only have a few years of experience. Arabic subject teachers are qualified with many years of experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration Qualifications</td>
<td>Majority from different backgrounds and only one in the field of education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation</td>
<td>Accredited mainly by CIS and other international accreditation organisations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.2.1 Location

IBS is located near the capital city of Kuwait; it is easily accessible from many roads, but most access roads have busy traffic. The school premises was used as a government public school before the Gulf War. The school was established after the Gulf War through renting the campus and establishing its premises; IBS continued to renovate and build several new buildings. The school campus occupies a large area, which has enabled the management to build new facilities and expand to become one of the largest international school campuses in Kuwait with playgrounds and sports fields of a quality that distinguish it from other local schools.
5.2.2 Context of school

IBS is known as a bilingual school with one of the largest Special Needs Departments in Kuwait. Many parents choose IBS because it is located close to their workplace in the capital city of Kuwait. The school segregates girls and boys in the middle and high school stages; they are taught in different classrooms but they intermingle in the same buildings during lunch breaks and other activities. There are several special needs sub-departments that support students with diverse learning needs and abilities.

7.2.3 History and establishment

IBS was founded by an educational investment company after the Gulf War during a period when other international schools were already established in Kuwait. IBS was created and initially managed by qualified educators but since then, management has changed many times due to changes in ownership. The school is expanding quickly; the construction of a seventh building to house extra middle school classes and a bigger theatre began at the time of collecting data.

7.2.4 Demographics of student and family background

IBS provides education for pre-kindergarten to Grade 12 children. There were 2481 students at the time of data collection. The majority of IBS students (over 97%) originate from educated middle class Kuwaiti families whereas the minority have different Arabic nationalities, such as Palestinian, Egyptian and Syrian, who are generally children of staff working at the school.

7.2.5 Description of school premises and classes

Previously, IBS was a government public school, at which time it comprised of several large old buildings. However, since it was established as a bilingual school in 1996, IBS has continued to renovate its buildings and facilities, as well as to build new ones. Its large campus size has made it possible to add more buildings and facilities, and construct open sport fields and playgrounds. Such opportunities are not available to most international
schools in Kuwait. The school is equipped with all necessary facilities, such as science laboratories, computer laboratories, gymnasiums, a swimming pool and a theatre.

7.2.6 Staff and teachers

There were 481 staff members employed at IBS at the time of data collection. English subject teachers come from various countries around the world: USA, UK, Canada, Australia, South Africa, Eastern Europe and India. Arabic subject teachers come mostly from Egypt and Jordan (Palestinians). Most of the English subject teachers are qualified but do not stay for more than two years. In contrast, Arabic subject teachers are mostly qualified and experienced and tend to stay for at least 10 years. Administrators, such as principals and vice principals, gain their positions through promotion. There is little evidence that they received specific training for these positions.

Sections 7.3 to 7.8 describe the research findings from IBS based on six themes that are also used in the CBS and CIBS case studies: (i) history and rapid growth; (ii) parent choice and satisfaction; (iii) curriculum and school system; (iv) national educational policies; (v) accreditation and its policies; and (vi) quality of education. The findings emerged from analysing the IBS case study.

7.3 History and rapid growth

As mentioned in Sections 5.3 and 6.3, this theme directly answers the first supporting question that requires an explanation of the factors that contributed to the emergence and rapid growth of international schools in Kuwait. The five categories of this theme are similar to the previous case studies: (i) history and school information; (ii) choice reasons; (iii) profit-orientation; (iv) culture and identity; and (v) university studies and future plans.

7.3.1 History and school information

It was difficult to obtain information from interviewees regarding this theme because continuous changes in ownership and management was experienced. The school was established by an educational investment company with shareholders, including the major
shareholder, who was a well-educated and well-known lady in Kuwait, aiming to achieve two goals: (i) to take up an investment opportunity; and (ii) to provide quality bilingual education, including special needs education programs. This information was confirmed by one parent, Abdelraheem, “They (owners) established this school at the beginning aiming to provide good quality education and (without) achieving profits … There were well-known, qualified people on the board when they established the school.” However, multiple changes in the ownership of IBS affected the school negatively because it had become a profit-making entity, as Abelraheem confirmed. Despite this, IBS continued to grow and expand noticeably and now provides a variety of educational services. The chairperson, Hiba, explained, “The school started 20 years (ago) with two buildings and now it has seven. The seventh building was designed to be the biggest centre for special needs education in the Middle East.”

7.3.2 Choice reasons

As mentioned in Sections 5.3.2 and 6.3.2, the perspectives of parents, students, principals and superintendents were sought to construct this theme and to understand the parents’ reasons for choosing bilingual international schools. Generally, their perspectives were similar and reflected the following four ideas: (i) poor quality of education in government schools; (ii) value of a bilingual education and English language skills; (iii) special needs educational services; and (iv) preparing students for attendance at Western universities.

According to participants, learning English language skills was one of the main reasons, that parents chose IBS. Aabed, a Grade 12 student, stated, “I think my parents want us to learn English so when we grow up, we can speak English fluently.” Another parent, Yaser, explained more about the importance of learning the English language:

> English language is an important issue especially for the future and in the openness of the world, language is an important issue because it opens many doors for the students and (helps) their communication with the outside world. This foundation (in English language) is very necessary as I have seen in my life.
The poor quality of education in government schools was one of the main reasons for seeking an alternative to government schools. Suhail, a Grade 12 student, explained:

In government schools, the quality of education is very low in most subjects, especially English, but in (IBS) the quality of education in most subjects is very high compared to a government school.

One parent, Abdelraheem, agreed:

In spite of the government school being free of charge … many of the Kuwaiti students prefer to join these schools. When you compare between the government schools and the private (international) ones you can recognise easily the big gap in the level of education between them (for the favour of international schools).

Bilingual schools was undoubtedly a major factor behind parents choosing IBS for their children’s education. The chairperson, Hiba, stated, “Being a bilingual school is a major element in choosing this school.” Another parent, Samer, agreed, “I like (my children) to (learn) both Arabic and English very well.”

Another important reason for choosing IBS is the variety of special educational programs provided by this school. These programs, which suit many students with different learning needs, are not available in most international schools in Kuwait. Yazeed, a Grade 12 student, mentioned some of these programs:

This school is unique … Students (with) weak English language skills are helped by the school and it offers many services that are not available in other schools, like ESL AFL (Arabic as Foreign Language) and an LSU (Learning Support Unit). (Most) schools in Kuwait do not offer an LSU, which simplifies the curriculum for weak students and it makes it very easy for them to understand so they can graduate and go to college.

This view was supported by a parent, Abdelraheem, who has a son who needs such services. He said, “The most attractive issue that encouraged us to join this school is the
opportunity for my second son to eventually join the inclusion classes so that he benefits more.”

Preparing students to attend university is another reason that motivates parents to choose IBS. A mother, Mona, explained:

I studied outside (Kuwait) and most people we know studied (abroad), so my daughter has ambitions to study outside. I gave her the choice … and she (wants) to (do further) study outside (Kuwait) … Studying in this school would help her to study (abroad).

7.3.3 Profit-orientation

IBS was established by an investment company supported by shareholders seeking a business opportunity after the Gulf War. The chairperson, Hiba, explained that the management had the responsibility of protecting and increasing the investment of shareholders. Parent Samer said, “The goal (of international schools) is solely to achieve profits.” Some parents in this school were very frustrated at not seeing an improvement in the standard of education in IBS despite remarkable growth in its size and student numbers. One parent, Abdelraheem, explained his frustration in detail:

Every year, the fees increase. I don’t know the reason behind this. Are there a lot of expenses in running this school? Are they taking advantage of the long waiting list to join the school or (is it) because they were successful in expanding? Ten years ago, (there were) only two classes (with fewer than) 17 students in each class but now (each class has) 24 or 25 students and they just completed constructing building number seven.

7.3.4 Culture and identity

Bilingual education and bilingual international schools became popular in Kuwait mainly because of the opportunity to study dual Arabic/English curricula and also due to their organisational culture being similar to the local culture. The HSP and director, Salam, explained this issue:
These days, the English language is very important and the parents want (their) kids to learn English but those parents who put their kids in international schools (rather than) bilingual schools realised that their kids forgot about the Arabic language, so they started valuing the bilingual schools. Even some of the other Western schools started changing to bilingual schools due to their popularity.

A parent, Abdelraheem, also confirmed this view:

Now I am paying 1000 or 2000 KD as a fee to this school so my son keeps taking Arabic subjects and keeps his identity and his language. Some other foreign (international) schools do not have such a system, so the student does not understand, speak, write or read his language or know his culture. This issue encouraged me to keep my son in a bilingual school like (IBS).

However, Abdelraheem criticised the “mixing (non-segregation) between the girls and boys” and considered it had a negative effect on students’ local cultures and traditions.

7.3.5 University studies and future plans

Most of IBS students and parents interviewed valued the opportunity for graduates to attend Western universities after completing high school. The HSP and director, Salam, explained how this matter is achievable for the students:

One reason that makes parents care and push their kids to achieve high marks is the scholarships offered by the government. If the student achieves three points or above out of four, he or she is eligible to get a scholarship and study anywhere he likes: Australia, the US, Britain, New Zealand or Ireland. They have the option of attending many universities accredited by the MOE.

7.3.6 International schools in Kuwait and neoliberalism

Regarding the privatisation of education and international schools in Kuwait in connection to neoliberalism understanding (Ball, 2012), IBS was established by a group of investors as a private international bilingual school to cater for Kuwaiti students. It also has a distinguished department for special needs students. IBS parents chose this kind of school because they were looking for an alternative education system to the low quality
government one; international education is a better choice in the age of globalisation (MacDonald, 2006). As shown in the analysis above, IBS is owned by an investment company that aims to earn an income. In addition to becoming an international bilingual school for mainstream students, IBS provides other educational services, such as special needs and inclusion education. This school was the first international bilingual school to offer such services, which aided in its marketing and increasing its popularity in Kuwait. Many international bilingual schools were established after IBS and followed its lead due to the fast growth of IBS. These schools run as for-profit organisations with a social mission (MacDonald, 2006). The MOE facilitated the establishment of IBS by easing the procedures required for issuing the school licence and allowing Kuwaiti students to enrol. MOE also supported IBS by providing them with vacant school premises in a distinguished location in Kuwait city to rent. In addition, it verified certificates issued by such schools and accepted their graduates in Kuwaiti universities and colleges. Therefore, the Kuwaiti government, through educational policies and regulations that have assisted in establishing schools like IBS, acted as a facilitator, according to neoliberal understanding, for the international education services industry to expand and grow in Kuwait (Woo, 2013).

7.4 Parents’ choice and satisfaction

The parents’ choice of IBS is analysed in Section 7.3.2. It reveals that their reasons included the poor quality of education in government schools, bilingual education, English language skills, preparing students to attend Western universities, and special educational programs offered to students with special needs.

The focus of analysis in this section is on parent and student satisfaction in terms of their experience at IBS and whether their expectations were being met.

7.4.1 Parent satisfaction

Generally, parent satisfaction revolves around proficient English language skills in addition to the confidence and self-reliance that students gain in IBS compared to government schools. However, parents were critical of IBS regarding the quality of education, high fees
and the increased burden on them. For example, Suhail, a Grade 12 student, was happy with the care, quality of education and English language skills at IBS when compared with government schools:

The difference between this school and a government school is that IBS makes sure that no problems face the students, especially with other students, but in government schools there was no such care. In government schools, the quality of education in most subjects is very low, especially the English language, but here the quality of education in most subjects is (comparatively) very high.

This view was also similar to several parents, including Abdulreheem, who said, “There is a big difference between my son’s self-reliance and English language (skills) in comparison to his relatives who go to government schools.” However, the quality of education did not meet all parents’ expectations. Samer said, “Academically, my son has benefitted but it wasn’t as good as we expected. (Sadly), the school is not that strong academically.” Parent, Abdelraheem, also commented on the quality issue at IBS, “Every year and for eight years, the quality of education continuously decreases (while) the fees … increase.”

Parent Samer also confirmed the continuous increases in fees, “I think it is expensive, I pay around 3700 KD, which is very close to the most reputable international schools in Kuwait. Every year they increase 5%. They charge a big amount but I don’t notice any good services.” Moreover, he explained the inefficiency of school services, “The responsibility here is more on the family and not on the school. The school is not offering what is required from them.”

7.4.2 Parents’ choice and cosmopolitanism

IBS parents, according to Weenink’s (2008) concept of cosmopolitan capital, are considered pragmatic cosmopolitans, rather than dedicated cosmopolitans. They chose this school as a kind of investment in their children. Through this school, children are prepared to join Western universities and eventually increase their future career opportunities locally and globally. English language skills and Western qualifications are considered necessary for a better future in this globalised age (Lowe, 2000). In IBS, parents do not only choose
bilingual education for the sake of gaining international qualifications, but they also prefer their children to retain their Arabic identity and be fluent in their mother tongue language: Arabic. Therefore, it is important for these parents to expect an appropriate balance between Arabic and English curricula to reach the anticipated advantage for their children (Waterson, 2015). In this case, parents could be described as ‘partial cosmopolitans’ (Appiah, 2007).

7.5 Curriculum and the school system

As mentioned in Sections 5.5 and 6.5, this theme covers six categories: (i) school system and bilingual education; (ii) curriculum; (iii) curriculum and national educational policies; (iv) curriculum and accreditation; (v) curriculum and teachers; and (vi) curriculum in the eyes of students and parents.

7.5.1 School system and bilingual education

After IBS was established at the end of the Gulf War, it focused on providing bilingual education with Arabic and English curricula, and also educational programs to suit students with different levels of abilities. The HSP and director, Salam, briefly explained the IBS system:

Many parents think that bilingual schools have 50% of the subjects in Arabic and 50% in English, but in reality 60-70% of the focus is on English with 30-40% focus on Arabic. However, Arabic is very strong in this school because the students graduate fluent in Arabic from this school.

Salam continued to explain the significant programs, including the special needs programs, that IBS was considered one of the first schools to provide:

This school would accept and deal with all types of students and have many programs to suit all kinds of students and learners, whether they are strong, weak, special needs students or other types of students. We have classes and programs such as special needs, inclusion classes, mainstream, and vocational departments so all kinds of students will find a place here.
7.5.2 Curriculum

7.5.2.1 Building the student’s personality

Parents indicated that IBS students learn to be open minded, confident, self-reliant and independent learners. One parent, Yaser, indicated that studying at IBS would give students “more confidence and commitment to depend upon themselves”. He continued, “They are taught through different projects to rely on themselves in taking decisions.” This view was also supported by parent, Abdelraheem, when he described how his son “relies on himself more than students in government schools”.

7.5.2.2 Curriculum as benchmarks and standard

The curriculum coordinator, Faten, explained:

Our curriculum framework is comprised of standards and benchmarks and under each benchmark we have scope and sequence. Thus, any new teachers will know exactly what they want to teach first, second and (so on). Our curriculum documents also include … year plans, (which) are done for each quarter and then the teacher is able to cover the entire curriculum. Previously, we didn’t have year plans so people did what they wanted to do or could manage. Now we ensure (teachers) cover everything in each grade.

However, the curriculum cannot be accessed online. Faten commented, “Actually it’s not available online but we have it in our public folder so every teacher can access it. We also put PDs, all templates, and teaching and learning policies in this public folder.” The HSP and director, Salam, mentioned that they are planning to make the curriculum available online in the near future:

Next year, we will have training for Atlas Rubicon curriculum mapping so all school departments are connected and there will be more mapping and sequencing of the curriculum across all stages (and) years. I already had training in Atlas Rubicon curriculum in Turkey.

7.5.2.3 Programs and elective subjects

IBS uses a mix and match curriculum as the HSP and director, Salam, explained:
Currently we have a mix and match curriculum. For example, the Math curriculum for the whole school is the American common core curriculum, the science curriculum is from McGill, the English curriculum is Sunshine. The benchmarks and standards are similar and coordinated across the school.

However, the Head of the English Department, Clare, explained that the curriculum meets the needs of students of the lower level, but higher level students need more challenging courses, such as AP classes. This issue was also discussed by the HSP and director, Salam, who clarified one reason behind the low level of curriculum standards:

We tried to introduce and teach Advanced Maths, which is necessary (along with) other scientific subjects for high school students if they wish to study engineering or medicine but many parents objected to that because they claimed that their children will achieve less marks if they have to study these subjects. This is a problematic issue for students who are planning for engineering and medical degrees because when they apply to universities, including Kuwait University, the requirement to be accepted is to have studied at least three scientific subjects in Grade 12: Physics, Chemistry and Maths.

This matter could be resolved by IBS offering these subjects, and other required subjects, as elective subjects in the way that CBS does.

7.5.2.4 Professional development and curriculum

Despite being accredited for at least 10 years, the PD programs in IBS are still of a poor standard. HSP Salam admitted:

We had unsatisfactory professional learning in the report by the accreditation committee. As a result the school employed a professional learning coordinator, and she is responsible for coordinating with the principals to design PD programs that suit the needs of each department and sending staff outside for PD courses.

She also indicated, in the quote mentioned in Section 7.5.2.2, that they will train teachers and staff on the new curriculum that they are about to adopt in 2019.
### 7.5.2.5 Continuous revising and updating

At IBS, the old curriculum with its deficiencies was modified and replaced by a newly-designed one, as instructed by the CIS committee. The curriculum coordinator, Faten, explained:

The new curriculum, which was adopted for the first time last year, inherited problematic issues. We have taken our curriculum from different sources, so basically to do horizontal alignments we have to integrate it across different subjects, which is very difficult. We have also decided to take the common core in math, which was found to have much higher standards than IBS students’ abilities.

Faten also described the teachers’ role in reviewing and updating the curriculum:

Teachers will be involved with the review of the curriculum from this year. We included a section called ‘reflection’ so the teachers will be able to reflect on their time, strategy, what worked, what didn’t work, what kind of activities we may consider as alternatives to what they already have in the curriculum.

### 7.5.3 Curriculum and national educational policies

As mentioned in Sections 5.5.3 and 6.5.3, the MOE enforces national Arabic subject curricula on all bilingual international schools but not the English subject curricula. This was also experienced at IBS, as the curriculum coordinator, Faten, confirmed, “(All) Arabic subjects’ curricula come from the ministry; the teachers’ don’t have any input.” She explained the role of the MOE regarding English subject curricula, “The ministry does not interfere with English subjects’ curricula, but we (must) abide by censorship and regulations.” HSP Salam confirmed this and explained details of the censorship process:

There are no adjustments (on curriculum received by the MOE) but since there is (MOE) censorship of the textbooks, especially the humanities and language subjects, we do censor the textbooks … We can’t do anything about subjects (prohibited by) the ministry.
7.5.4 Curriculum and accreditation

Accreditation in CBS and CIBS played a positive role in improving the curriculum at IBS. The curriculum coordinator, Faten, explained how the Western curriculum at IBS was lacking in many areas and difficult to align vertically:

The accreditation process was the reason why we changed our curriculum. When we had a preparation visit three years ago, they faced major problems with our curriculum; each division of the school had a different curriculum. Thus there was no correlation and no build up; there was no vertical or horizontal alignment in that curriculum. In order to meet the standards and indicators of CIS accreditation, we undertook an overhaul of not just the curriculum, but also the curriculum framework, year plans, and lesson plans. We now have common year and lesson plans throughout the school (because) of accreditation. We introduced internationalism, localism, globalism, and 21st century skills to meet the standards of accreditation. So a major overhaul is definitely due to accreditation.

7.5.5 Curriculum and teachers

As mentioned in Sections 5.5.5 and 6.5.5, the teachers’ role is vital in implementing and delivering the curriculum, as planned and required. Thus, analysing their role concerning the curriculum is important in IBS. Faten, the curriculum coordinator, described how the administration ensured delivering the curriculum:

The phase we are in now is doing curriculum and developing the scope and sequence for specialist subjects. We have given a checklist to the HODs and coordinators to observe and monitor the year and lesson plans. HODs also do classrooms visits.

From a teacher’s point of view, the Head of the English Department, Clare, expressed her satisfaction with the curriculum:

It was very clearly defined. Last year we made it even more clearly defined and simpler by making a year plan for each grade level, so everyone has a quarterly outline to follow. (After receiving) a list of readings and (connected) activities, teachers can modify their personal teaching.
However, the other English teacher, King, had a different point of view and stated that the curriculum was not clear or easy to follow. This disagreement in perspective could be the result of a big difference in their years of experiences.

Clare indicated that teachers have the option to adjust the resources and materials to suit their students:

Teachers can adjust the year plan and make their own. They can add or take away from it as long as they are teaching by the standards and objectives that we have planned for the students to reach. They can add projects as they see fit.

7.5.6 Curriculum in the eyes of students and parents

The IBS students interviewed in this study did not specify any views regarding the curriculum. Their perspectives were general, “In this school, there is a balance between Arabic and English subjects.” On the other hand, parents were critical of the English subject curricula. For example, parent, Abdelraheem, expressed his disapproval of being forced to buy extra books and paying for after-school tutoring because difficult aspects of the curriculum were not fully taught:

We need to bring a teacher to help my son or we bring him books … so he can understand the information. This is a sign of weakness in the school because with all the fees I am paying I shouldn’t pay for … more books or a teacher to help … One issue I discussed and objected to in the parents’ committee meetings is the tutoring classes at the school after school hours because they charge for it.

This point was also mentioned from a different perspective by parent Mona:

We ask other teachers to tutor my daughter so she can understand the subject. We look for extra books, research the internet and ask other students from other international schools to get help in understanding the book. The curriculum is excellent but the way of teaching and giving the information is very weak.
National educational policies

As mentioned in Section 5.6, this theme directly answers the fourth supporting research question, which relates to MOE policies for international schools in Kuwait. After general analysis of the collected data, all international schools were found to act independently concerning major educational policies without accountability or evaluation by the MOE.

Regarding IBS, the same four categories that were analysed in the previous case study in Chapter Six will also be analysed here: (i) rules and regulations of Kuwait’s MOE in relation to curriculum; (ii) teacher qualifications; (iii) academic performance; and (iv) government scholarships.

Curriculum Ministry policies

As mentioned in Sections 5.6.1 and 6.6.1, the MOE does not have specific regulations and policies regarding Western curricula taught in the international schools. However, the MOE has full control over the curricula of Arabic subjects in these schools.

In IBS, this matter was confirmed by the curriculum coordinator, Faten, when she was asked whether the MOE plays a role in designing English subject curricula. She said, “No, the MOE doesn’t. We only have to abide by the censorship regulations.” Then she added information on the censorship process:

The censorship criteria are updated regularly and we receive it in both Arabic and English. We have to be careful about promoting or (deeply analysing) several religions and when talking about certain countries. We have to be mindful when we approach aspects of Islam so we don’t seem defamatory or derogatory.

She also clarified the role of the MOE in relation to Arabic curricula, “In Arabic subjects, the entire curriculum comes from the ministry. The teachers don’t have any input.”
7.6.2 Teacher qualification requirements

It is mentioned in Sections 5.6.2 and 6.6.2 that the MOE recently introduced new regulations to ensure that international schools employ qualified teachers. This was also found in IBS through my observations (after working in the independent school section in Kuwait for many years), but the critical point here is regarding administrator qualifications, that is, those of vice-principals, principals and superintendents. There are no clear regulations from the MOE regarding educational qualifications for administrators. This has resulted in many international schools, including IBS, promoting teachers to these positions without proper training, courses or certification.

7.6.3 Monitoring academic performance

It was mentioned in Sections 5.6.3 and 6.6.3 that the MOE has no system or policies to monitor the academic performance of students in international schools in Kuwait. The MOE does not even require international schools to organise international or national standardised tests for their students. The MOE monitors Arabic assessment only by approving the examinations designed by the school itself. The Head of the English Department at IBS, Clare, confirmed that “the MOE does not have any kind of control over (English subjects’) assessments or tests, (but) I think they do for the Arabic subjects’ tests”. HSP Salam confirmed that IBS students do not regularly sit for international or national standardised examinations, which indicates that this is not required by the MOE. She said, “In the last two years, we organised it once and we used IOWA tests to check our students’ levels.”

7.6.4 Government scholarships

As mentioned in Sections 5.6.4 and 6.6.4, Kuwaiti students in government and international schools compete to obtain government scholarships, especially higher level bursaries for students to study in Kuwait and abroad. Accordingly, students strive to obtain a high GPA in order to secure the required scholarship. However, international school students cannot be assessed equally because most of them do not sit for national or international standardised tests due to international schools in Kuwait organising their own assessments,
which are generally designed at a lower level compared to international assessment programs, such as the IB or AP.

Obtaining government scholarships is the main reason why parents encourage their children to achieve a high GPA. The HSP, Salma, commented:

One reason (why) parents care and push their kids to achieve high marks is the scholarships offered by the government. If the student achieves three points and above out of four, he will be eligible to obtain a scholarship and study anywhere he likes: Australia, the US, Britain, New Zealand, Ireland.

However, feedback suggests that students at IBS are not assessed at high or challenging levels. Durgam, a Grade 11 student, admitted, “For example, if you ask some teachers about what’s coming in the exam, some of them will make it easy by telling the students (the main areas of the exam) so we don’t waste much time.”

7.6.5 National educational policies and education quality assurance

The MOE in Kuwait is responsible for shaping and managing the education system, including international schools in Kuwait. One important role the MOE should play is imposing certain expectations on international schools to achieve (Vanhoof & Van Petegem, 2007). It is important that international schools in Kuwait are accountable, which can be implemented through the MOE by having a monitoring system in place to observe the quality of education in these schools (Vanhoof & Van Petegem, 2007). However, according to comments made by IBS participants, the MOE does not have such a monitoring system and there are no specific policies in place to evaluate the quality of education in these schools. The MOE has passed on the responsibility of evaluating international schools and monitoring their academic performance in Kuwait to international accreditation agencies, such as CIS and MSA. By doing so, the MOE is encouraging neoliberalism policies in Kuwait as international accreditation powers are strengthening at the expense of local educational institutes and policies (Baltodano, 2012).
In this case study, IBS, the analysis showed that the MOE plays a limited role in formulating policies for evaluating and monitoring international schools in Kuwait. Accordingly, this practice affected the quality of education at IBS and did not meet the expectations of parents and stakeholders.

7.7 Accreditation and its policies

As explained in Section 5.7 and 6.7, the importance of international school accreditation, such as CIS endorsement, stems from the fact that it is compulsory in Kuwait to seek international school accreditation, and it is also a vital area of research globally. This theme relates to the third supporting question.

All participants, except students, were asked about their perspectives of CIS accreditation issues. The same categories used in CBS and CIBS case studies to explain this theme and respond to the third supporting question was also used for IBS. These categories are important for accreditation, the accreditation process and its efficiency, as well as its effect on curriculum, assessment and teachers.

7.7.1 Accreditation importance

After being established in 1996, it took IBS eight years to gain CIS accreditation in 2004. It was the first bilingual international school to encompass a distinguished special needs division, in addition to mainstream classes in Kuwait. The chairperson, Hiba, explained the importance of this accreditation to the school:

Seeking accreditation for this school was very important for many reasons. First, as an international school it must have accreditation by an international organisation. Accreditation promotes the school and attracts more people to (register) their children, (thus) increasing the students’ number. Additionally, accreditation helps in improving the teaching (education) quality.

The HSP and director, Salam, described the importance of accreditation from a different perspective:
Another issue of importance is that any educational conference in the world would send an invitation for the school because it is listed as an accredited international school. So as a school, it will be always involved and (aware of international) education issues. Furthermore, (having) the school accredited is a prestigious matter and (builds a) good reputation around the world. Moreover, it is important to follow up with the latest educational strengths and ideas as a result of having a constant connection with international schools’ organisations.

5.7.2 Accreditation process and its efficiency

The accreditation process and procedures for IBS were similar to those of CBS and CIBS because they were also accredited by CIS.

The accreditation coordinator, Asera, did not go through the procedures of the accreditation process during her interview but listed the main areas of focus by the CIS accreditation committee and its main goals, “Teaching and learning, especially student assessments, evaluation of staff, PD training programs, and quality of teaching are the main areas of focus.” She indicated another important focus area:

The operation system was a big section of the accreditation process; it includes the maintenance, health and safety sections. It covers every detail, for example, how the grounds should be, so uneven pavements were changed. Another example is the field itself; you can see some different construction itself now. We asked them to paint all cracks. Many renovations happened in the last three months.

Asera explained how the CIS committee verified all school activities during their visits:

Five months before the CIS committee comes here for a visit, they receive an evidence report. Then when they come to the school, they see what is happening and they go back to the report we sent to add more suggestions if needed.

She summarised the purpose of the accreditation visit:

The purpose of the accreditation visit is improvement … Evaluation itself is part of continuous improvement, and the CIS committee’s visit to inspect the
school. This sets a standard that the school is going to achieve by moving forward. It’s a never-ending process of school improvement.

Asera also explained how the accreditation final report was written, and by whom:

It’s not a one person decision or only the visiting team’s decision. The team comes to evaluate what the school has achieved compared to the previous period. It is a complicated process to write such a report.

Concerning the efficiency of accreditation, HSP Salam clearly stated major positive effects it had on IBS:

We didn’t have any educational policy before, but as a requirement for accreditation we designed strategic planning for all stages of the school so we have proper transitions from one stage to another. We have just completed these plans this year and we sent them to CIS and NEASC for their approval. We (principals) had a meeting and decided what direction the school should take regarding the necessary courses and the school’s needs in three years’ time. We used to do a five-year plan but after consulting an educational expert, she recommended that we design a strategic plan for three years instead of five as it is a long period. So all departments in the school made the strategic planning and educational goals for three years.

He described valuable experiences gained during the CIS committee’s visit:

They checked the curriculum and classified it from A to Z. For one week, they visited and stayed in many classes … It was a very enriching experience because we did a self-study, recognised our weaknesses and learned how to deal with them. Accordingly, it changed our strategic planning for the coming period.

However, the Head of the High School English Department, Clare, described the accreditation process as a ‘dog and pony show’, in spite of recognising the positive effect of accreditation on students and their learning:

I think the idea of it is pushing teachers to work a little harder, which in turn is good for students and their learning, but … some parts of the accreditation
process are a little show, what I call the dog and pony show, as I’ve been through it in a couple of different schools.

### 7.7.3 Accreditation effect on curriculum

Accreditation has a major effect on curriculum in IBS. The accreditation coordinator, Asera, indicated that prior to accreditation, “We never had year or lesson plans, but due to CIS accreditation, we now have a curriculum aligned vertically and we have year plans and lesson plans.”

The curriculum coordinator, Faten, explained how the CIS accreditation agency required IBS to fulfil certain curriculum requirements, such as internationalism, interculturalism, differentiation, skills-based education and standards-based assessments:

CIS actually does not interfere in designing the curriculum, but more in the implementation of the curriculum. For them now with the 8th edition, we basically have to fulfil certain requirements, for example internationalism, interculturalism and differentiation. Now we are into 21st century learning, they want us to focus on skills-based education and our assessments have to be standards-based, so if we have a curriculum and we say that we are following it, our assessments have to be standards-based so we can test the strength of our curriculum and be able to ascertain whether our students are able to fulfil the requirements of the curriculum.

In addition, Asera, the accreditation coordinator, mentioned that the CIS committee required IBS to be progressive by utilising research- and project-based activities:

The CIS committee requires us to make sure that there is progression in each grade level in the curriculum itself and they also ask you have to have scope and sequence: what are we teaching and what are we achieving. They are looking more for research- and project-based activities.

Asera also indicated that it was not compulsory, according to the CIS accreditation agency, to employ full-time accreditation and curriculum coordinators:

According to CIS, it’s not compulsory to employ an accreditation officer but in the recent visit one team member said the agency is looking for a standard
to hire a full time accreditation officer because the standard is increasing and
the expectations from CIS have increased. But for the curriculum coordinator,
there is nothing stated regarding that.

7.7.4 Accreditation effect on assessment

As mentioned in Section 5.7.4, assessment is a critical issue in this research because it
measures the quality of education in international schools in Kuwait. In the analysis below,
the assessment system in IBS had no clear policy in place before accreditation was
achieved, but recently, due to accreditation visits and reports, the school designed a new
assessment policy. In addition, no international standardised tests were organised for the
students despite IBS being accredited for 10 years.

The accreditation coordinator, Asera, stated clearly that before accreditation and until
recently, IBS had no educational policies regarding teaching, learning, curriculum and
policy:

We didn’t have an assessment policy or teaching and learning policies, but
now we do. Thus, whenever someone joins the school, he gets a file filled with
copies of the curriculum, lesson plans, templates, year plans and everything he
needs. He also gets the handbook policies: teaching and learning policy and
assessment policy.

However, this positive effect of accreditation on educational policies, including the
assessment policy, was not noticed until many years after accreditation when I worked
there. After having left IBS recently, these policies still do not exist.

The other important issue regarding assessment is organising international standardised
tests for all grades, especially to evaluate high school students internationally. The
accreditation coordinator, Asera, mentioned that the CIS committee recommended IBS to
organise them, but the school has not yet done so, apart from two tests for IOWA. She said,
“We did IOWA tests (a couple of times) but we didn’t do it across the school, just for
certain grade levels.” It is unclear why the CIS accreditation agency did not firmly request
IBS to organise reliable tests, especially as 10 years have passed since it was granted international accreditation.

In relation to monitoring the academic performance of IBS by CIS, the Head of the High School English Department, Clare, said:

We had to have student samples of high, medium, and low level work, so we would show the CIS committee … where our school was in terms of certain standards. I kept students’ portfolios for all of my students; I keep major grades, projects, tests, quizzes and essays.

This answer is similar to the one received in the CIBS case study, which raises the same question: *Is it enough to monitor a student's academic performance by following such procedures, or is it just ensuring that there is a system in place for student records and results?*

### 7.7.5 Accreditation effect on teachers

As explained in Sections 5.7.5 and 6.7.5, a qualified experienced teacher plays a major role in increasing the quality of education in international schools in Kuwait. These schools face strong competition in recruiting qualified teachers due to an increased number of international schools in Kuwait and the Gulf region. Therefore, this matter is considered critical for many schools that are not willing to pay competitive salaries and allowances. According to the analysis below, IBS is one of those schools that keeps recruiting teachers every two years due to a high turnover of staff.

Generally, and to a certain extent, accreditation has a positive effect on teaching and teachers in IBS. The accreditation coordinator, Asera, mentioned in Section 7.7.4, that IBS did not have a teaching and learning policy before the accreditation committee visited the school and recommended designing a new teaching policy. One important CIS recommendation in the educational policy was to vary its teaching methods, as the Head of the High School English Department, Clare, explained in detail:
The CIS committee has a different variety of teaching. They don’t want people just standing and lecturing the entire lesson or copying notes from the board. They want to see more student involvement in their learning and that’s been the case in both times I’ve been through accreditation. They have asked us to show that in our lesson plans: how we differentiate and how we show different types of learning.

For teachers’ qualifications, the accreditation coordinator, Asera, stated that the CIS accreditation agency expected teachers “to have a bachelor’s degree in education, and if they don’t have a bachelor degree in education, then they have to have training or a certificate in education.” However, this statement is not totally accurate and does not compare with other views from the previous two case studies. The CIS accreditation agency advised the school to hire qualified teachers but they do not request or enforce it on the school. According to my observations while working at IBS for many years and also during my data collection time at the school, the majority of English subject teachers are qualified and many are native speakers.

Regarding salaries and allowances, the CIS committee advised IBS to review and increase them to reduce the high staff turnover being experienced. Asera commented, “CIS committee recommended that, in order to retain staff and reduce the turnover, we have to review the salaries and benefit packages. This is something we are looking forward to.”

7.7.6 Accreditation connection to neoliberalism and cosmopolitanism

According to Baltodano (2012), international accreditation is considered one of the main forces of neoliberalism that ensures the quality of education in international schools, as well as aids in marketing the brand of these schools. Additionally, international accreditation agencies, such as CIS and NEASC, have a strong connection to cosmopolitanism (Baltodano, 2012) as they focus on elements of global citizenship and are part of the pragmatic current of international education (Keller, 2015). According to participants’ perspectives, IBS students are familiar with other cultures around the world as a result of the curriculum and association with staff members from different countries. However, the student’s intercultural understanding is still below expectation because over
90% of the student population are Kuwaitis. This situation limits their experience and ability to improve their understanding of other cultures.

### 7.8 Quality of education

As mentioned in Sections 5.8 and 6.8, the effectiveness interpretation analytical approach is used to measure the quality of education in the schools being studied. In this approach, the quality depends on judging the input and process indicators, and their effect on outcome indicators. The main focus and analysis in this theme are student behaviour, teachers, academic administration, management, staff qualifications and experience, orientation and PD programs, education quality drivers, and academic achievement (performance).

#### 7.8.1 Students’ nature and behaviour

Problematic student behaviour does exist in IBS to a certain extent. Some experienced teachers have the skills and ability to deal with these problems, but in many situations, especially when new teachers are in charge, it is not easy to control challenging student behaviour. Accordingly, this issue affects teaching time and creativity.

The counsellor, Anne, described IBS students as being academically and behaviourally not responsible. The Head of the High School English Department, Clare, said the problem existed to a lesser extent in her class:

> I have a few of them … but I handle these issues better than others … I don’t have an issue with kids talking in class, but they don’t climb the windows or throw things at me. I heard those stories but they never happened to me. I mean there are some classes here you don’t want to teach; they will wear you out but I can control them.

Furthermore, the High School English teacher, King, had a similar opinion about his students, “They are respectful individually, but collectively they are not that respectful.” The students interviewed had similar views, including Aabed, a Grade 12 student, who suggested severe punishment for misbehaving students:
This school needs to discipline students. Before they used to discipline students who misbehaved with different kinds of punishments, but now the students do not care if they are put in detention or suspended … But if there is a severe punishment waiting for the misbehaving ones, no student would dare to break the rules.

### 7.8.2 Teachers

IBS teachers, according to the interviewees and my observations, are divided into three categories. The first is Arabic subject teachers, who are mostly qualified and experienced. The English subject teachers cover two types: (i) teachers who are not native speakers; and (ii) those who are not qualified but have many years of experience. A third category covers teachers who are native speakers and qualified, but mostly new graduates. Generally, the quality of English subject teachers is neither high nor low. One factor affecting the quality of education in this school is the high number of teachers who do not stay more than two years.

Parent Samer commented on the quality of teachers, “The Arabic teachers generally are good but the Western teachers (generally) are not of great value.” Parent Yaser agreed, “Some teachers are good and some are not.” Parent Abdelraheem shared the same point of view, “My son said that he likes some teachers but not others because they have a certain way (in teaching), are experienced and well trained, but not the others.”

In contrast, Mona (mother of a Grade 12 student) as mentioned in her quote in Section 7.4, was more critical of the quality of IBS English subject teachers as she thinks that their quality and their teaching are very low. Parent Abdelraheem thinks a reason for the low quality of teachers could be the ‘continuous change’:

> When the student got used to the teacher, curriculum and system, but suddenly you change all of that and bring something that is totally different, the student becomes confused and doesn’t know how to function and loses faith in the school. As a school, they should be organised in keeping the system functioning without quick changes in critical areas like teachers, curriculum, and assessment types.
The HSP and director, Salam, justified the turnover of teachers by explaining:

We aim for high calibre teachers, but we have a big turnover of teachers every year. Nearly 40% don’t renew their contracts, so it is difficult for us to pick and choose … Most of the overseas teachers we employ are tourist teachers who are young and come to stay for a maximum two years. But it’s easy to deal with them because they are enthusiastic about their jobs and they are well trained.

7.8.3 Academic administration

IBS academic administration mainly consists of the superintendent and principals. At the time of data collection, the superintendent was not qualified as he was promoted by the previous management from teacher to elementary principal to superintendent in a very short time. Therefore, the current management took steps to remove him from his position and let him go, which happened after the data collection. Generally, academic administrators at IBS are not qualified or trained in administration and they are promoted without proper training or completing governance courses to attain the relevant qualification. Therefore, IBS suffered from the constant staff changes in recruiting and replacing unqualified administrators over the last five years.

Parent Yaser explained the extent of damage caused by the previous superintendent, which took a long time to repair:

When the previous superintendent was in charge, the level of the school went down, and it took two years to fix the faults he caused. The owners changed and insisted on removing all the corruption caused by him.

Additionally, parent Abdelraheem explained that continuous changes of administration was a major factor that negatively affected the quality of education. He indicated that it was difficult to keep effective communications within the school as the administration kept changing:

The relationship between the parents and the administration is very important. If I build relationships with the principal or superintendent and after a short
time I find that he left the school, I will be forced to build a new relationship with the new administrator.

However, parent Samer believed that the administration was not functioning correctly because they were not independent, as administrators are not given enough authority by the management to function effectively. This point of view was supported by the teacher, King, about how misbehaving students were not punished as a result of management interference in the administration’s decisions. He said, “It’s a struggle even with the senior management because of parents using their strong connection with the management. Problems are settled without solving or dealing with the students’ behaviour properly.”

7.8.4 Management

As mentioned in Sections 5.8.4 and 6.8.4, the term ‘management’ in this study refers to the school board, who oversees all matters relating to school management and governance. The IBS board consists of members who represent an investment company that owns the majority share of the school. At the time of data collection, the board members have changed many times during the last five years due to changes of ownership. As mentioned in the analysis below, IBS is a business that is expected to generate profit.

Most of the parents interviewed had the same viewpoint that the main goal of IBS management is to achieve maximum profit. Abdelraheem (parent) stated clearly, “The main aim for the management is to get as much profit as possible. They look mainly at the budget to make sure there is enough profit.” Parent Samer expressed the same opinion:

The only (IBS) management goal is achieving profit. Most international schools in Kuwait are aiming for profit. They are looking for cheap staff; they do not employ good quality teachers because they have to give them more money. This attitude affects our children’s education negatively.

7.8.5 Staff qualifications and experience

As mentioned in Section 7.2.6, qualified Western native speaker staff members are not the majority. The school focuses on employing qualified Western native speakers for English
language subjects but not for Science and Maths subjects. Very few administrators are qualified Western native English speakers.

For example, the accreditation coordinator is Indian with no experience in the field of Education. She was the special needs principal’s secretary for some years before promoted to accreditation coordinator. The HSP and director is also not a Westerner and she does not have educational qualifications. She described her qualifications and experience:

I have 20 years of experience in education. I have a Master in translation and linguistics but I didn’t work in that field and entered the field of education. I worked in the Jordanian University as a language instructor and then I taught in Turkey for one year. Then I came to this school as an ESL instructor, became vice principal and then principal.

However, the English language teachers I interviewed were qualified Western native English speakers. The Head of the High School English Department, Clare, described her qualifications and experience, “I have a Master’s degree in special education and I am also certified in English. I have a lot of little titles and I’ve been teaching for 12 years. This is my third year in Kuwait in this school.”

7.8.6 Orientation and professional development programs

As discussed in Section 5.8.6, PD programs have a direct link to improving a student’s learning and increasing the quality of education. However, not all international schools in Kuwait are willing to assign a suitable budget to introduce PD programs due to their cost. This situation is the result of poor judgement of their value by unqualified administration and management.

IBS is one school that did not implement effective PD programs despite being accredited for 10 years. Some administration members and coordinators were sent abroad to attend the necessary training but the majority of staff did not have the same opportunity. The management promised to increase the PD budget upon the request of the CIS accreditation committee, but a large part of this budget was spent on updating the IT Department and establishing a commercial learning centre for non-staff members.
The accreditation coordinator, Asera, explained that the IBS board agreed to raise the PD budget (up to 150,000 KD) because the CIS suggested that it was necessary to achieve high quality education. Therefore, IBS agreed to send its staff members abroad for training.

However, it is possible that the PD budget amount was not accurate because a large portion of it was spent on items unrelated to PD. The HSP and director, Salam explained:

Administration promised a PD budget of about 250,000 KD, but I doubt that it will all go on PD. Within the PD budget, they included employing the IT manager to improve IT in the school and to design a new school program for the use of iPads in the classroom. They renovated many classrooms in the school, so they consider all these expenses part of the PD budget. Their aim is to make the school a training centre, and already they opened a language centre teaching English and TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), and they also included all these expenses and others in the PD budget.

7.8.7 Education quality drivers

At IBS, the aim to achieve a high standard of international education was limited. Although the school succeeded in providing innovative educational programs, such as special needs and resource inclusion programs, its quality measures were limited in international education and the acquisition of English language skills.

Both high school English teachers interviewed agreed on the low standard of education. For example, the high school English teacher, King, stated, “High achiever students know that there is something missing.” Clare, the Head of the High School English Department, agreed with this view and suggested “high level classes, such as AP classes” are missing.

The HSP and director, Salam, gave a clear example of low education standards:

In the last two years, we organised (international standardised tests) once and we used IOWA testing to check our students’ levels. The first time, the level was very bad and there was a big gap; there was about 6-7 years below grade level but last year was better. Now with the MAP testing we are planning to test them twice a year; one of them through IOWA and we will choose another exam.
Another interesting comment on the low quality of education at IBS is from parent Abdelraheem:

The owners of this school do not put their children in this school. They put them in other schools, which is not good for (IBS) because if their children were here, it means they trust the education in this school. Then others would assume that the school is providing good quality education.

Furthermore, when comparing education quality drivers of CBS (Chapter Five) with IBS, the following three findings are revealed:

1. Regarding the non-profit policy, IBS is not a non-profit school but is a profitable private company owned by shareholders who are interested in investing and earning profit. The chairperson, Hiba, said clearly when interviewed that the shareholder rights and profits should be protected and considered a priority. Parent Abdelraheem, in Section 7.3.3, expressed his anger about the profit IBS is making without providing better services. Parent Samer also said, “(IBS management) is to achieve profit only. It is not only this school, but most schools in Kuwait are aiming for profits.”

2. Concerning parents’ involvement in their children’s education, some are overly involved in their children’s education and some are difficult to reach. The main issue for them is the marks. They try their best to influence teachers to give their children an ‘A’. The Head of the High School English Department, Clare, said:

I had some students (and I’ve) never seen or talked to their parents, and there are some overly involved. It ranges from those that I can’t contact to some I wanted to run from when I see them coming. Some want to do everything for their children, so I tried to talk to them out of that because they need to grow. I teach Grade 12; it’s a time to grow. Most of them are very involved and responsive, some are overly responsive and some have just tried to make me change their grades, and they’re willing to pay for what it takes to get an A.

This point of view is also supported by the HSP and director, Salam:
The main (concern) for the parents is achieving high marks. They care about academic performance but if you try to explain to the parent that the academic performance that shows the true level of his son’s abilities and skills is more important than giving him a mark much higher than what he deserves, the parent would not accept that and keeps arguing for the sake of granting his son the mark he wishes.

3. For quality indicators of education, there is clear evidence that the current status of the school revealed low standards of education and limited student achievement. The HSP and director, Salam, gave strong evidence, as quoted in Section 7.5.2.3, of the limited chances of their graduates to continue in many fields related to Science and Medicine because IBS does not offer certain subjects at the high school level.

7.8.8 Academic achievement

As mentioned in Sections 5.8.8 and 6.8.8, the academic achievement of students in international schools is measured according to shared expectations of most parents, that is, proficiency in English language skills and functioning well by international standards in order to be well prepared to enrol in Western universities.

Regarding English language skills, IBS students are generally weak in English fluency, as the Head of the High School English Department, Clare, explained:

Many students struggle with curriculum (because of) the barrier of (English) language. Some of them are fine … so I think that’s the barrier to their learning effectively and doing well in so many (areas), so I think that the language barrier is the biggest struggle that I have.

Moreover, the students were not well prepared to enter Western universities directly without undertaking preparation courses or a foundation year. HSP Salam explains in Section 7.5.2.3 how difficult it is for many IBS graduates to attend any course that requires science subjects because the school does not offer these subjects in Grade 12.
7.8.9 Education quality assurance concept

In relation to the quality of education, IBS interviews were analysed using Cheng’s (2003) concept of education quality assurance, which involves internal, interface and future quality assurance elements. In regard to the internal quality assurance of education in IBS, the analysis showed that academic achievements, including fluency in English language skills and the ability to enter Western universities, of students in this school are below expectation.

For the interface quality assurance of education in IBS, it was found in the analysis that parental involvement in this school is limited and the management was not forthcoming with their concerns and recommendations. In addition, the quality of students and staff members in IBS did not assist in improving the quality of education. IBS students, according to the analysis above, misbehaved and were not easy to control, which affected teaching and learning outcomes. The majority of the academic administration and teachers were not fully qualified and experienced. The turnover of teachers was high, which affected the stability of the education process and accordingly, the quality of education at IBS. Furthermore, the IBS board of trustees (management), as explained in the analysis, consists of members who represent the investment company that owns the school. Those members are not qualified to manage this kind of educational institution, which negatively affects school improvement. According to Cheng (2003), the continuous improvement of staff and practices is a significant indicator of interface quality assurance of education. In IBS, according to the participants’ perspectives, the PD programs are not efficient and require considerable improvement to meet the needs of its staff members and to eventually raise the level of education quality at the school.

In regard to future quality assurance of education, the analysis of IBS interviews was conducted in connection to the individualisation, localisation and globalisation of education (Cheng, 2003). In relation to the individualisation of education at IBS, it was found that this element of education was not implemented effectively as the school lacked resources and practices to enable students to be independent in their learning. Furthermore, the elective
subjects and the extracurricular activities were limited, which restricted opportunities and skills for students to attain. For localised and globalised learning, IBS students, due to studying the local Arabic curriculum, experienced localised learning. The delivery of this curriculum at this school was considered to be well designed, according to participant comments. However, the delivery of the international (American) curriculum was not efficient in IBS, which affected the globalised learning in this school negatively.

7.9 Conclusion

In the case study of IBS, the school represents a model of a bilingual international school with a Special Needs Department, providing educational programs to suit students with learning difficulties in addition to mainstream students in Kuwait. It has a good Arabic department and many special needs and learning difficulty programs, which attracts many families whose children can benefit from these programs. However, the school is lacking in the areas of English language skills and international education curricula.

Parent and student satisfaction at IBS revolves around proficiency in English language skills compared to the government education system, as well as the confidence and self-reliance that students gain from IBS. However, parents were critical of the quality of education and its high fees.

IBS has full control over its American curricula without any interference from the MOE. However, the curricula were not functioning well as they were gathered from different sources, making alignment difficult. The CIS accreditation process has recently resulted in better organisation and improvement in the American curricula.

Although improvements have gradually been put in place since IBS was accredited 10 years ago, accreditation had major positive effects on teaching, assessment, curricula and general education policies in the school. Many recommendations, such as PD programs, still need to be implemented.
According to the analysis in this chapter, many factors affect the quality of education at IBS, such as student behaviour discouraging creative teaching strategies. In addition, the turnover of Western teachers is high and IBS administrators, who are not fully qualified, are continually being replaced. Moreover, the profit-orientation policy of the board is a priority, according to most parents interviewed. Parent involvement is limited as a result of the board’s policies. This situation has led to a low standard of academic achievement by IBS students, whose English language skills and preparation to enter Western universities does not fulfil parents’ expectations.
Chapter Eight: Cross-Case Study and Discussion of Findings

8.1 Introduction

Chapter Eight examines five main findings resulting from the themes discussed across the CBS, CIBS and IBS case studies. These findings arise in response to the primary research question and supporting research sub-questions.

**Principal research question**

*What priorities govern the development of international schools in Kuwait?*

**Supporting sub-questions**

1. What core factors contributed to the emergence and rapid growth of international schools in Kuwait?

2. Why do some Kuwaiti parents choose international schools for their children? To what extent do their experiences meet their expectations?

3. How do considerations around international accreditation influence the organisation and practice of international schools in Kuwait?

4. How do international schools respond to requirements from official bodies, such as the Kuwaiti Ministry of Education (MOE) and demands for ‘quality education’ in international schools in Kuwait?

The fifth finding relates to the main theme of this study: The quality of education in international schools in Kuwait. Each finding is discussed in relation to how they are substantiated and evidenced in three case studies, and how they are connected to theoretical frameworks of neoliberalism, cosmopolitanism and quality assurance.

The findings in this chapter relate to the detailed analysis provided in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, alongside interview data collected from officials from CIS and the MOE, who
were also invited to participate. The perspectives of officials from CIS and the MOE were not discussed in the three case studies because their perspectives were general, covering all international schools in Kuwait rather than any specific school. However, their perspectives are incorporated here for their relationship to insights gathered in interviews with people associated with the three schools.

Figure 8.1 Main areas of the study

8.2 Rapid growth of international schools in Kuwait

Stakeholders’ perceptions indicate that economic growth, poor education in public schools, the easing of national education policies, and high profitability are the main factors that have contributed to the rapid growth of international bilingual schools in Kuwait over the past 20 years.

This finding directly answers the first supporting question, which seeks to explain the factors that have contributed to the emergence and rapid growth of international schools in Kuwait, especially bilingual schools. The CIS official, Gary, who is a director of a major department at CIS and visited Kuwait many times, stated clearly, “One of the biggest growth areas in the world in international schools is this (Gulf) region and the other is
South East Asia and mainland China.” He confirmed, “We’ve seen in the last five to 10 years in several parts of the world, including this (Gulf) region, that international schools are growing rapidly, and they are increasingly very diverse.” Gary also explained one key reason for the rapid growth of these schools, “Historically, international schools tend to act as a lag economic indicator behind economic growth, so when you get economic growth in place it is almost always true.” This point of view is valid in the Gulf region as most Gulf countries, especially the UAE, Qatar and Kuwait, are currently considered to be among the richest countries in the world (McMullan, 2017). According to the latest data on the growth of the international school market, published by ISC Research, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar occupy front places in this report (Nagraj, 2016). However, the situation of international schools in each of these Gulf countries is different to the others. Generally, international schools in the UAE and Qatar are supported and regulated by their governments, but in Kuwait the situation differs. Individuals and business people, as seen in this analysis, have been the main drivers behind the exponential growth of international schools in Kuwait, which is “fuelled (internationally) by the rapid progress of globalisation” (Bunnell, 2005, as cited in Keller, 2015, p. 4). Looking at neoliberal principles (Ball, 2012), regarding the privatisation of education and international schools, the situation in Kuwait is unique in terms of parents and business providers as the main force behind this sector, and not national government education policies. As explained through the categories of this theme in the three case studies, an increasing number of private providers of international schools treat education as a market. The government, through the MOE, did not introduce and establish such schools. Instead, conceding to pressure from Kuwaiti parents, the MOE allowed them to enrol their children in such schools, thus acting in a similar way to the situation in Hong Kong, which Woo (2013, p. 41) explained, “As a broker and facilitator in the education system … by granting schools more land … (and) vacant school premises … (for) international schools’ (operations).”

CIBS and IBS were established after the Gulf War in 1990, when most sectors in Kuwait, including the education sector, were not functioning properly as a result of the war (Chapin,
The quality of the national education system in government schools was affected severely due to the departure of most non-Kuwaitis, especially the Palestinians, upon whom the education system was heavily dependent (Chapin, 1993), which prompted parents to look for an alternative to government schools. The most appropriate option for those parents who could afford to pay was bilingual international schools. The CIS official, Gary, identified similar reasons for the growth of international schools, “One … reason for the growth may be dissatisfaction with the alternatives (local government schools).” He explained, “Sometimes … adopting an international curriculum is because of dissatisfaction with the curriculum that they have domestically, or dissatisfaction with the dominant pedagogies in how that curriculum is taught, so they look for a different curriculum.” This situation encouraged many business people and educationalists to establish international, specifically bilingual, schools in Kuwait as an alternative to government schools. Even CBS, established many years before the war, expanded considerably after the war and moved to much larger premises. The demand for such schools from local Kuwaiti parents increased due to weak government school systems and “some (parents began) to look towards international education as a desirable alternative to other local educational options in this age of globalisation” (MacDonald, 2006, p. 207).

At the same time, the MOE allowed Kuwaiti nationals to attend international schools after the war, which was another major factor in the establishment of international schools in Kuwait. Indeed, neither the MOE nor national educational policies started this movement of international schools. According to neoliberalism understanding, “the state facilitates its education system’s transformation into an education services industry. Education and all its aspects become a matter of consumer choice and efficient commodification … the market, and not the state, improves the education system” (Woo, 2013, p. 38).

This market of international schools in Kuwait, or ‘marketisation of education’, follows a similar trend, to a certain extent, in “countries around the world, recently, and some could argue that international schools are becoming more business-like in their approach – similar to other types of organisations with a social mission, such as universities and hospitals” (MacDonald, 2006, p. 194). This description of international schools in Kuwait agrees with
Richards’ (1998, as cited in MacDonald, 2006, p. 201) view that many international schools attempt to adopt the “ideals of an international education” philosophy but their establishment basis is essentially market driven.

This market has expanded rapidly due to an increased demand for international school education. According to comments gathered in interviews and discussed in this thesis, achieving profit was a key factor in establishing most of these schools. It was observed that profiting from the establishment of international schools in Kuwait was a major consideration for most international schools that were established in Kuwait after the Gulf War. Parent Jasem, a board member at CBS, commented on this issue, “For a lot of people, it is a business, it is profit (making) for them”. Stakeholder perceptions are that two schools in this study, CIBS and IBS, manage their schools on a ‘for-profit’ basis. This was indicated by the Head of the Board of IBS, Hiba, “The management have the responsibility of protecting and increasing the investment of the shareholders”. Although CBS is a not-for-profit school, it still charges high fees (in 2016 approximately $US12,000 p.a. for secondary school students) in order to provide good quality education.

Globally, “international schools have been identified … as an area of strong potential growth and profitability” (Waterson, 2015, p. 11). They are considered ‘very good business’ according to Andrew Fitzmaurice, former Chief Executive Officer of Nord Anglia, who was quoted in 2004 (Waterson, 2015, p. 11), “International Schools are a very good business for us: a growth business. We make a 40% return on capital.” This is similar to what is happening in Kuwait, as confirmed from the three case studies where three international schools expanded rapidly in a short time. For example, IBS increased their premises from one building to seven in 10 years due to local demand and profitability. There appears to be a growing acceptance of private education in Kuwait and for-profit schools internationally, as observed by Ball (1993, p. 3, as cited in Waterson, 2015):

There is now in educational policy a well-established, powerful and complex ideology of the market and a linked culture of choice which are underpinned by dangerous idealisations about the workings of markets, the effects of parental choice and of ‘profit’ incentives in education. (p. 8)
As Waterson (2015) postulated:

Neoliberal theorists such as Chubb and Moe (1988), Horowitz (2011), Tooley (1997) and Sahlgren (2011) … argue that competition, consumer choice, and private enterprise improve not only the quality of the education service … but also its accessibility. (p. 9)

Thus, the profit motive “from a neoliberal perspective should theoretically be a driver for improvements in quality” (Waterson, 2015, p. 15) of education in international schools, but as demonstrated in the analysis of information gathered in this study, IBS and CIBS have been profiting and expanding rapidly with limited academic achievement. Mohsen, a parent at CIBS, was frustrated because his son could not enrol directly in a UK university without studying a foundation year. IBS director, Salam, stated that IBS students have shown that they are six to seven years below grade level internationally when they are assessed in accordance with IOWA, an international assessment scale. Factors that led to the rapid growth of international schools in Kuwait are illustrated in Figure 8.2.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 8.2  Factors of rapid growth of international schools in Kuwait**
8.3 Parental choice and satisfaction

The reasons for parents to choose international (bilingual) schools in Kuwait appear to revolve around three main issues: (i) benefits of a multilingual or bilingual education; (ii) advantages incurred by acquiring English language skills; and (iii) the desire to prepare children appropriately to attend Western universities abroad.

This finding is directly related to responses to the second supporting research question, which addresses the motives of parents choosing bilingual international schools for their children and whether they are satisfied with the outcome of their experience.

Interview participants who discussed the relevant three schools shared similar perspectives on reasons for choosing bilingual international schools in Kuwait. Some specific reasons were given for choosing one particular bilingual international school over another, which are explained in detail in each case study. However, the focus in this section of the study is on reasons for choosing (bilingual) international schools in general. The reasons given by interviewees relate to the benefits of a bilingual education, English language skills, and preparation for attending universities in Western countries (Table 8.3).

![Figure 8.3 Reasons for choosing international bilingual schools in Kuwait](image)
The analysis section of the study was published as a chapter by the researcher and Carol Reid under the title ‘Imagining the Cosmopolitan Global Citizen? Parents’ Choice of International Schools in Kuwait’ (Reid & Ibrahim, 2017). Therefore, the discussion here will draw, in part, on what has already been published.

Cosmopolitan theory (as discussed in Chapter Three) was used to analyse interviews with parents in this study. Their responses were “considered in relation to globalisation – of the English language, Western curriculum (or international education) – and the effect of these schools and their education on the students’ identity and culture” (Reid & Ibrahim, 2017, p. 265), and the role and benefits of international schools in the future of their children will be discussed in relation to Weenink’s (2008) concept of cosmopolitan capital.

There are many approaches and notions of cosmopolitanism. The focus of discussion is on two related ideas: “The idea of an awareness of global connectedness and … the idea of an orientation of open-mindedness towards the Other” (Moran, 2010, p. 1089). Weenink (2008) suggested the former results in pragmatic cosmopolitans, while the latter are more likely to be dedicated cosmopolitans. Weenink argued that dedicated cosmopolitans consider openness is necessary and indeed desired, while pragmatic cosmopolitans see it as necessary in a globalised world.

The findings suggest that parents are primarily pragmatic cosmopolitans rather than dedicated cosmopolitans. This leads to an insight into the types of capacities that parents believe are required in relation to their evaluation of the education provided by these schools. Despite a similarity to Weenink’s research when he investigated the parents of students in international schools in the Netherlands, the social group in this study is significantly different, and thus as Weenink (2008) argued, this determines “the rules of the appropriate forms of cosmopolitan behaviour” (p. 1104). In applying cosmopolitan theory in this discussion, it is possible to gain an understanding of how a cosmopolitan disposition is a source of power and a form of social and cultural capital (Weenink, 2008, p. 1092) that parents may be seeking when choosing an international school for their children. For
example, lives are not only shaped by economic capital, but, as Noordegraaf and Schinkel, (2011) explained:

By ‘dispositions of the mind and body’ and ‘cultural goods’ institutionalised in the form of educational qualifications (cultural capital). Exchange of capital is in turn structured by social obligations, networks, and connections, which are often institutionalised in the form of titles and credentials (social capital). (p. 104)

By examining the analysis, it is possible to make visible what constitutes professional capital. The English language and progressive pedagogies appear to be central, but so are “dispositions of the mind and body” and “cultural goods” (Noordegraaf & Schinkel, 2011, p. 104) in the form of cultural capital.

According to participants’ perspectives, “the attraction to international schools by local parents is not only motivated by the desire to access a prestigious commodity but also in the hope of attending prestigious Western universities as they believe in the ‘symbolic capital embodied in international qualifications’” (Lowe, 2000, as cited in Hayden, 2011, p. 218). Those parents are investing in their children and for them to gain international qualifications guarantees better opportunities in a “stiffening of the local positional competition on the one hand and a globalisation of that competition on the other” (Lowe, 2000, p. 27). This was confirmed by the CIS official, Gary, when he discussed this situation from the schools’ point of view, “Schools decide they want that because of the marketability, because of wanting to send young people upon graduation to universities all over the world, either to bachelor or post-bachelor levels.”

As Weenink (2008) stated, “A typical characteristic of pragmatic cosmopolitans is that they restrict cosmopolitanism to learning English and speak of appropriating this asset as a competitive advantage” (p. 1097). For parents in this study, learning English was a key reason for choosing international schools. “Consistently cited as a strong reason for parental choice of international schools in a number of studies has been English-medium education” (Hayden, 2011, p. 217). All parents in this study, whether highly educated or
not, spoke of their wish for their children to be fluent in English, which is ‘the lingua franca of the global business community’, in order to avoid the difficulties they faced during their education and career as non-native English speakers.

Thus pragmatic cosmopolitanism demonstrates that parents in this study consider this kind of education a capital that will help preserve their social status and secure the future for their children. This consideration is also argued by Cambridge (2003, as cited in Keller, 2015, p. 22):

> Wealthy global elite parents seek economic advantages for their children … (by paying for them to attend) exclusive schools, learn English as the international language of business, attend a program that allows for easy mobility between schools, and earn a diploma that permits access to top universities.

This vision of Kuwaiti parents correlates, in principle, what has been happening in the international school sector in recent years. Hayden (2011) claimed that “increasing numbers of international schools have opened to cater largely for affluent host country nationals who seek a competitive edge for their children” (p. 220). Keller (2015) supported this view by stating, “Academic priority as an explanatory theme has strong support in the literature” (p. 11). Keller provided further examples to support his statement when he cited Mackenzie, Hayden and Thomson (2003), who found that “most parents are more immediately interested in a school’s academic achievement than in its philosophy” (Keller, 2015, p. 11).

Therefore, an interesting paradox emerges: Cosmopolitan orientations on the parents’ side but a Western focus in schools. As Weenink (2008) noted, the “social process of cosmopolitanisation may result in the globalising of minds: the awareness – whether one likes it, fears it or hates it – of being part of the world and at the same time being part of a particular locally and historically grounded place or situation” (p. 1091).

All parents in the study wanted better options but did not want to sacrifice their Arabic identity, therefore, a bilingual school was the most attractive option. The tension for most
parents in this study was that the desire for global capacity could come at the cost of local
knowledge and language. The desire for positional advantage for their children in the form
of international qualifications and associated skills sets (Waterson, 2015) is balanced by the
maintenance of Arabic in bilingual schools. A demand for language continuity, skills and
knowledge expanded by Western curricula has consequences for international schools if
they are to survive in the market. This leads to understanding the other side of the language
equation; the second reason that parents from all schools focused strongly on the desire for
English language acquisition for their children. A desire for bilingual education was
paramount, according to parents in this study.

For some parents, the choice of bilingual education was not in isolation from other factors.
For example, Islamic values and Arabic identity were just as important and not to be
subsumed for the sake of English education. As Appiah (2007) argued, people can be
partial cosmopolitans, where some values are universal and others are local and particular.
For example, Mohsen, a parent at CIBS said:

I preferred for my sons to be committed to Islamic values, so since the
curriculum of this school is designed to include and respect Islamic values …
and because of the English language, I thought at the time it is the best option
… for a better future.

‘Partial cosmopolitan’ (Appiah, 2007) is a useful concept because it allows for openness to
be consistent across all fields, as well as multiple cosmopolitanisms (Woodward et al.,
2008). This leads to consideration of the impact of choosing a bilingual international school
on identity and culture. There is no doubt that lifestyles and the wider culture are changing
as a result of dealing with a stronger connection to the ‘outside’ world, especially the
Western world.

At CIBS, values were more important than the curriculum content in the assessment of
capacity building. For all three CIBS parents interviewed, the school was lacking in certain
areas, such as progressive pedagogies, but despite the shortcomings, they felt they had
made the right decision in choosing this school because it is more conservative than others.
However, at CBS, the issue was about preparing students for university education and building a confident personality with many skills. The correspondence of content in the curriculum to similar to the West, which is important in helping students to compete and succeed in Western universities. This was a common theme in the interviews with CBS parents that related to cosmopolitan capital comprising “bodily and mental predispositions and competencies (savoir faire) which help to engage confidently in such arenas. Moreover, it provides a competitive edge, a head start vis-à-vis competitors.” (Weenink, 2008, p. 1092).

At IBS, in contrast, parents were satisfied with the degree of confidence and self-reliance their children gained at school, as well as the level of English language skills when compared to government schools. Parents believe that their main goal is to prepare their children and ensure their ability to enter Western universities. Generally, parents were critical of the quality of education and educational services provided by the school. Additionally, the culture of IBS, which does not segregate on the basis of gender, was not conservative enough for some parents, which resulted in their sons enrolling in the school but not daughters.

Clearly, contradictions can emerge around parental decisions to choose international schools. Interviews suggested that the majority of parents are pragmatic cosmopolitans rather than dedicated cosmopolitans. As a consequence, while they may have made decisions based on expectations about the school culture and school marketing, the effects are not predictable. The desire for cosmopolitan capital, therefore, takes many forms as it is “an expression of agency, which is acted out when people are forced to cope with the cosmopolitan condition when it enters their personal lives” (Weenink, 2008, p. 1103). The capacities parents feel are necessary and present, and include a disposition that is confident, independent and self-directed yet balanced with cultural and linguistic continuity. We see this in the desire for intellectual expression and innovation to set their children free to ‘know the world’ without being consumed by Western values.
8.4 International accreditation effect

According to stakeholders’ perceptions, accreditation has many positive values and effects on international (bilingual) schools in Kuwait but at the same time, many of its necessary (quality assurance) recommendations are not enforced, that is, they are ignored by some schools.

This finding is a direct response to the third research supporting question, which seeks an explanation of the influence of international accreditation agencies on international schools in Kuwait. The analysis of CBS, CIBS and IBS, which are accredited by the CIS, shows that the accreditation process has many positive outcomes in that it promotes these schools nationally and internationally. In addition, accreditation is compulsory in Kuwait, according to MOE official, Mubarak:

> It is compulsory to be accredited by the system, whether American or British, that the school chooses to follow to prove the quality of education that it offers. As a ministry, we are not involved in enforcing certain criteria for the school to follow or choose a certain accredited agency as long as it is internationally recognised. Whenever the school receives the accreditation certificate or letter (we require them) to provide us with a copy.

There are many issues relating to accreditation that should be discussed in order to gain a better understanding of the role of international accreditation and its effect on accredited international schools in Kuwait. The discussion begins with international accreditation and accrediting agencies, and it discusses this process as an aspect of globalisation, addressing its connection to neoliberalism and cosmopolitanism. Following is a discussion on areas of accreditation, such as its importance, efficiency, quality standards, and its effect on curriculum, teachers and academic performance.

Since international accreditation of international schools is compulsory in Kuwait, and it is valued as an indication of a good quality ‘brand’ for schools, the number of international schools that seeks accreditation is continuously rising. Thus, “the responsibilities of accredited agencies increases commensurately” (Ranger, 2014, p. 36). Examples of this
trend lie in three schools in this study, which have all been accredited by CIS. Baltodano (2012) argued that international accreditation is considered one of “the commanding forces of neoliberalism” (Baltodano, 2012, p. 497) and it is considered among the major consequences of ‘neoliberal reforms’ that ‘support the privatisation of education’. In spite of claiming to be a non-profit organisation, CIS official, Gary, stated:

CIS is not-for-profit and we make sure that we don’t make too much because we don’t want to use them as members. The only source of income is the members’ fees. There is no other source of income at all: no shareholders, no government link or anything like that. So our surplus (is) kept relatively low because we need to exercise stewardship with members’ money.

CIS and other accreditation agencies play an important role in globalising international education by offering quality assurance and designing global quality standards for international schools to follow (Cambridge & Thompson, 2004). The kind of service provided by accreditation agencies, as part of neoliberalism, aids in providing ‘globally-branded products’ through international schools, that offer ‘a reliable service throughout the world’ (Cambridge & Thompson, 2004). Murphy explained how accreditation is a necessary process for schools and argued that “peripatetic (and local) parents are becoming familiar with the process of accreditation and are beginning to feel that placing their children in an unexamined school is a risk they do not wish to take” (Murphy, 1998, p. 223, as cited in Cambridge & Thomson 2004, p. 170). Parents in Kuwait are also becoming familiar with international accreditation, as demonstrated in the interview data. They appear to consider it a sign of assurance of the quality of these schools. MOE official, Mubarak, described accreditation as “a kind of quality assurance for the school itself” and argued that it is a necessary (marketing) element to “attract more parents to register their (children) in their schools as the parents prefer accredited schools over non-accredited schools”.

International accreditation also plays a significant role regarding cosmopolitanism. Keller (2015) described this role as a part of the quality control of international education:

Organisations such as the Council of International Schools, the International Baccalaureate and the International Schools Association have each developed
instruments for evaluating international schools. While there are differences among these evaluation schemes, they share many common elements, including a focus on values related to ideals such as internationalism, intercultural understanding, and global citizenship. (p. 4)

‘Internationalism’, ‘intercultural understanding’ and ‘global citizenship’ are terms used directly or indirectly in the interviews and considered by interviewees to be essential in accreditation processes and principles. The CIS official, Gary, pointed out the importance of these principles, “One goal of accreditation is to make sure students receive high-class guaranteed international education in a school that is ethical and committed to the development of interculturalism.” In support of the previous statement, Keller (2015, p. 6) concluded that “international education organisations, such as CIS, IB and ISA, may reflect a general bias toward the internationalist agenda”. On the other hand, Cambridge and Thompson (2004) proposed that accreditation is part of the “pragmatic, globalist current of international education”, and further argued:

Pragmatic international education may be identified with the processes of economic and cultural globalisation, expressed in terms of satisfying the increasing demands for educational qualifications that are portable between schools and transferable between educational systems (accessed through) … the spread of global quality standards through quality assurance processes such as accreditation (p. 164, as cited in Hayden, 2011, p. 219).

As indicated in the interviews, students in these schools, especially in CBS, tend to be more open minded than government school students, but the situation in these schools still does not aid in their development of intercultural understanding and associated ideological values. One reason for this is that over 90% of the student population in every school is from a Kuwaiti background, and there is no diversity in these schools. An example of this reality is the difficulty that a non-Kuwaiti CBS student faces in being ‘a minority’. Her mother described this feeling:

One problem is the diversity issue because we are the minority in the school … Over 90% of students are Kuwaitis, so we are maybe among 5% or 8% of the students who are not Kuwaitis. (Minority) students face some troubles … and don’t feel comfortable socialising with (and befriending) other students.
Generally, this situation exists inside and outside schools in Kuwait, but when it is an issue in accredited international schools, questions should be raised since internationalism, intercultural understanding and cosmopolitanism are considered part of international education and is fundamental within the principles informing the education system in these schools, as explained by Cambridge and Thomson (2004):

> The internationalist approach to the practice of international education is founded upon international relations, with aspirations for the promotion of peace and understanding between nations. It embraces a progressive existential and experiential educational philosophy that values the moral development of the individual and recognises the importance of service to the community and the development of a sense of responsible citizenship. Internationalist international education celebrates cultural diversity and promotes an international-minded outlook. (p. 173)

### 8.4.1 Importance of accreditation

In addition to being required by the MOE, international accreditation of international schools in Kuwait is valuable for both schools and parents, according to the interviews with participants in this study. Cambridge (2002) argued that this is the case worldwide as “the process of accreditation by external agencies such as ECIS (known now as the Council of International Schools) has become an increasingly widespread practice among schools offering an international education” (p. 240).

In CBS, accreditation is considered by its participants as a form of evaluation for the school. They appear to have a precise understanding of this process, and this stems from the intention of administration and staff to deal with it as a “self-study … to offer an opportunity for ‘a rigorous process of self-examination’ (CIS, 2003, p. 6) … that will result in the presentation of ‘an honest, broad view of the school’” (CIS, 2003, p. 7 as cited in Fertig 2007, p. 337). According to CBS participants, the accreditation process helps the school to meet high expectations and standards of international education. The school described it as “a requirement that the school matches up to standards that ‘reflect the characteristics of a high quality educational experience’” (CIS, 2003, p. 6, as cited in Fertig, 2007, p. 339). Some staff also described accreditation as a process of continuing
improvement, believing that through their critical self-reflection (self-evaluation process), they can maintain and improve their school (Fertig, 2007). According to the director of CBS, parents at CBS are aware of the value of the accreditation process and its importance. Fertig (2007) explained the value of accreditation to parents as providing “a degree of reassurance about both the quality of the education offered to their children and the transportability of the educational experiences and qualifications that have resulted from this education” (p. 344).

For CIBS, accreditation is linked to developing strengths within the school. CIBS staff say that the school has improved noticeably since applying for accreditation, and that it has played a major role in pinpointing weaknesses and areas that require improvement. Generally, before accreditation, CIBS had, and still has but to a lesser extent, unqualified staff in management, academic administration and among its teachers. Due to accreditation requirements, there has been a significant positive change, which is described by Fullan (2011) as a moral imperative “derived from the accomplishments of accreditation, those related to sustainable school improvement, a moral imperative both on the accreditors and on the accredited” (p. 23).

According to the IBS HSP and director, Salam, accreditation is a prestigious matter that gives the school a credible reputation, which will promote the school and increase student numbers. Increasing student numbers and expanding rapidly is an important goal for the management of this school since it is owned by an investment company. IBS uses accreditation to market its educational services to parents (or ‘clients’). Cambridge (2002) argued that “branded international education products and services might form one selling point out of many for the marketing of the school to potential clients” (p. 31). The HSP of IBS, Salam, added that through accreditation, the school can be informed about, and move towards, the adoption of educational strengths and ideas emerging internationally. According to her, IBS as an accredited school receives regular invitations to attend international educational conferences, which help to keep the school aware of educational development globally. This is true, especially through the external evaluation by CIS committee members who have acquired diverse experiences from different international
schools around the world. This issue was mentioned by the PD coordinator at CBS, who explained that the accreditation committee continues to make suggestions to improve the quality of education in the school.

8.4.2 Accreditation process and efficiency

All three schools in this study were accredited by the same accreditation agency, CIS. Therefore, their accreditation procedures are worthy of discussion. Briefly, according to the analysis, accreditation involves a comprehensive self-study process that takes approximately 18 months and requires the construction of a detailed report of up to 800 pages. Gary, the CIS official, commented on this self-study process:

The goal of accreditation is to help schools use an evaluation model which is partly based on self-evaluation and partly on peer evaluation. ‘Peer’ means our accreditation teams are evaluation teams drawn from other international school personnel. It’s a volunteer base system. The process is led by myself and my team of 12.

This process of self-evaluation addresses standards in major areas in the school. CIS official, Gary, explained:

(These standards) cover the curriculum, operational systems, technology, infrastructure, space for children, staffing issues such as professional development support, growth of all staff (including non-teaching staff). They cover issues such as governance, leadership, the health and safety of the children, everything. (Schools) must meet those standards before becoming a member.

Generally, the self-study is intended to offer an opportunity for ‘a rigorous process of self-examination’ (CIS, 2003, p. 6), involving every member of staff, a process that will result in the presentation of ‘an honest, broad view of the school’ (CIS, 2003, p. 7). It is a lengthy process that requires the involvement of school staff, who, in CIBS and IBS, are not paid for the time involved in its implementation, according to information gathered in interviews. There are no clear guidelines published by the CIS accreditation agency regarding the rights of staff who were asked to work on the self-evaluation report. In this
study, two schools, CIBS and IBS, did not compensate staff for their time and effort in the preparation of the self-evaluation report.

An important element in relation to this self-evaluation process is described by Fertig (2007) as a ‘non-threatening process’. It is organised and implemented by the school. Therefore, the school is in charge of its operation and reflection upon its activities. However, “the CIS (2003, p. 7) guidelines specifically warn that the self-study ‘should not represent the views of any minority group within the school’” (Fertig, 2007, p. 337). This means the report should clearly present all the operations and processes of education at the school and should also represent the views of all stakeholders at the school. Information gathered in interviews suggested that in CIBS and IBS, the self-study was, to a certain extent, a representation of the views of management, especially in connection to PD, salaries and rights of teachers and staff.

Fertig, an education researcher at the University of Bath who has published many articles about international schools, education and accreditation, argued that “the primary goal (of school evaluation) is to help schools to maintain and improve through critical self-reflection” (Fertig, 2007, p. 338). He said that it is mainly focused on equipping teachers, as the main active stakeholder in the schools, “with the know-how to evaluate the quality of learning in their classrooms so that they do not have to rely on an external view” (Fertig, 2007, p. 338). Teachers, therefore, should play a major role in this process in order to improve their teaching and the overall quality of education in their schools (Fertig, 2007). Fertig argued that “this approach (of school evaluation) gives crucial importance to the professional autonomy of teachers” (2007, p. 338). However, the teachers in CIBS and IBS appeared to have limited ‘professional autonomy’ in the evaluation. This limits their ability to play a significant role in the self-evaluation process and to judge “information regarding the quality of the school’s education, and to make decisions that provide recommendations” (Devos, 1998, p. 2). Evidence gathered in interviews suggests that many of the teachers in CIBS and IBS lack the support of their administration to function professionally with full autonomy. This stands in contrast to the situation in CBS, as discussed in Chapter Five.
Interviews with teachers showed that the self-evaluation process can be a complex, detailed and exhausting process. After a school completes the self-study report, it is sent to the accreditation agency, CIS. Approximately five months after reading the report, the agency team visits the school to verify information in the report. Evidence from the analysis shows that the accreditation committee checks the report in detail. They may request additional documents, question parents and students and visit classes. CIS guidelines states, “(In) the team visit phase of the accrediting process, the school is … ‘evaluated in terms of how successful it is in meeting its own stated purposes’ while also being ‘required to meet a set of written standards in each area of its operation’” (CIS, 2003, p. 6, as cited in Fertig, 2007, p. 339). Participants interviewed for this project were generally satisfied with the accreditation process, even though it required considerable time and effort from staff, especially when staff in CIBS and IBS were not paid for this work.

8.4.3 Accreditation effect on curriculum

The analysis showed that curriculum is one of the main focus areas of the CIS accreditation agency. According to the analysis, curriculum should be concise and designed according to a set of standards. When CBS, CIBS and IBS first applied for international accreditation, they did not have a curriculum or it was inadequate. Thus, the accreditation process can be seen to be challenging for them to design a comprehensible, suitable international curriculum.

Analysis showed that during the accreditation guidance of these three schools, CIS focused on ensuring that the curriculum from Grades 1-12 revolved around a key concept that comprised of connected ideas. This resulted in the School Guidance Statement, which includes the mission statement and philosophy. Gary, the CIS official, explained this issue:

Our role is to make sure that the chosen curriculum of the school is enabling the student to succeed in line with the mission and values of the school. We would pick that up in our visits and in the reports we receive from the schools.

Fertig (2007) stated that the “visiting team will clearly be searching for evidence in terms of the precise curriculum package chosen by the school and also through a probing
examination of classroom practice” (p. 341). Part of the curriculum for each school, considered absolutely essential for CIS accreditation, is the mission statement. Every accredited school must have a mission statement that guides all educational processes and objectives. In relation to this issue, it is a CIS requirement that schools include intercultural understanding, known also as internationalism, in the school philosophy. In spite of the importance of the mission statement and its connection to the education process of the school, it is not evident that all three Kuwaiti schools examined in this study imposed this on the curriculum for Grades 1-12, nor do they appear to connect it to requirements for student success. This is commented on by interviewees and is indicated also by CIS official, Gary, quoted earlier in Section 8.3, who observed that students in these schools are more pragmatic and far from being internationalist.

The analysis of three case studies in Chapters Five, Six and Seven shows that another focus of accreditation concerning the curriculum is teaching and learning methods. CIS, according to evidence from the analysis, required the schools to focus on differentiation in teaching and to use a learner-centred approach. It is clearly indicated by CIS standards that the school “is expected to adopt and implement a comprehensive academic curriculum … (which will lead to) … student-centred pedagogy, where diverse learning and assessment strategies are evident” (CIS, 2003, p. 31 as cited in Fertig, 2007, p. 341). This learning approach is not prevalent in schools in the Gulf, including Kuwait, and neither students nor teachers in government or private schools in Kuwait are familiar with it. Interview evidence suggests that teaching staff in CIBS find it difficult to implement a learner-centred approach because they are not trained to adopt such an approach, so they need to be acculturated. In 2014, the administration of CIBS employed a company to train its teachers to become more skilled in this approach, thus enabling a balance between a teacher-centred (which is well rooted in this society) and learner-centred approach to working strategically.

8.4.4 Accreditation effect on assessment

According to comments from staff at all three schools interviewed for this project, the CIS accreditation agency does not require international schools to organise international
standards tests; it only advises and recommends them. This raises the question: Why does CIS not make standardised tests compulsory for international schools, especially when international schools, as shown in CIBS and IBS, are not adopting a high standard of effective assessment methods? CIBS and IBS use traditional assessment methods. The accreditation coordinator at CIBS, Salma, said that the accreditation committee reported their assessment tasks as being “traditional and structured to serve content”. This remains the case despite CIBS and IBS having been accredited for many years. The IBS director explained that they do not organise international standardised test regularly for their students because their student levels are six years below the required grade level. But she said they are planning to organise such tests:

In the last two years, we organised (international standardised tests) once and we used IOWA testing to check our students’ levels. The first time, the level was very bad and there was a big gap; it was about 6-7 years below grade level … Now with the MAP testing we are planning to test them twice a year; one of them through IOWA and we will choose another exam.

Despite these failings, the analysis indicated that CIS has had a positive effect on assessments by requiring international schools to adopt assessment methods that focus on skills and the implementation of knowledge, rather than depending solely on traditional written examinations and the repetition of knowledge.

According to this analysis, CIS monitors the academic performance of students by checking a small random sample of report cards, tests and student works. They analyse this information to see if indications are similar, increasing or decreasing over a set period of time. This procedure prompts the question: Is the CIS process rigorous enough to effectively monitor a school’s academic performance and its overall service to students? CIS official, Gary, explained how CIS monitors each school’s academic performance, “We monitor their performance by four visits in a 10-year cycle. If we have concerns, we ask the school for a special report and we can have follow up visits to monitor how well that concern has been addressed.” He explained the nature of the CIS academic performance monitoring system:
(Perhaps) a school is dishonest about that … and wants to present to the outside world that it’s doing a great job following the curriculum for the benefit of the students, but in reality it isn’t. Our process involves a standardised survey towards stakeholder groups at the beginning and an anonymous survey that’s managed by Endicott College in Boston, USA, that gives parents, students, teachers, support staff, board members, and alumni the right to comment on the school. That’s one source of evidence. We visit the school to talk and listen to everybody and we look at the difference in the curriculum that’s planned and the curriculum in practice by going into lessons, so I think we would certainly identify any problem like that.

However, this anonymous survey was not mentioned at all in the case studies.

8.4.5 Accreditation effect on teachers

The analysis showed that CIS checks teacher qualifications, subjects of their degree, and what they are teaching at each grade level. However, this study found that CIBS continues to employ unqualified and underqualified teachers, who are not trained for an international school context. CIS simply recommends that most teachers should have a teaching certificate. It is not clear why CIS recommendations regarding teacher qualifications are not adhered to by all schools and why actions are not taken against schools that do not employ qualified teachers.

Regarding teacher salaries and allowances, CIS checked each school’s pay scale and suggested that they increase staff remunerations, where appropriate. Despite this, CIBS and IBS did not do so. This issue is critical as paying a low wage directly links to the employment of less qualified teachers. The issue of teacher and staff salaries was discussed with CIS official, Gary, who explained that CIS set the standards and it is up to the school to follow them:

We set standards but the school decides on its curriculum, approach to education, and how much it pays its teachers. If there are standards that all teachers must be suitably qualified to (teach) children and they must be paid fairly and regularly, according to a contract, then it’s up to the school to meet them.
Paying low salaries and allowances would compel schools to employ unqualified and inexperienced teachers, as identified in the analysis mainly in CIBS and partly in IBS. The accreditation coordinator at CIBS, Salma, stated that CIS found the salaries at her school to be low and suggested an increase. Furthermore, at IBS, according to the accreditation coordinator, Asera, CIS recommended a salary increase after low salaries were the main reason for high teacher turnover. Interviewees suggested that this situation was due to mismanagement in CIBS and opting for higher profits in IBS. This point was mentioned by Jasem, a parent and board member at CBS, who is a well-known figure in Kuwaiti society. He argued that there are complex issues behind the problem of finding and keeping good quality teachers in Kuwait:

The reason is that Kuwait is (no longer) an attractive place for the best teachers to come … because there are many competitive countries in this region, like Dubai and Qatar, and in the far East, including China. (At) the job fairs, you cannot attract the best teachers because of competition and the political situation in this region, so this situation affected the quality of education in this school.

Thus, the situation of Kuwaiti international schools regarding the employment of qualified teachers is not always in agreement with Canterford (2009), who argued that “the majority of international schools, whenever possible and finances allowing, look to employ Western-trained, English-speaking teachers who preferably have previous experience of the curricular being offered” (p. 383).

Regarding PD programs for teachers, the accreditation coordinator at CIBS, Salma, revealed that the CIS accreditation committee deemed the PD programs at CIBS to be below standard and therefore requested improvement. The accreditation coordinator at IBS, Asera, commented:

The recommendation of the CIS … (was that) if it wants to have quality staff, IBS should send (teachers to) and arrange good quality training and effective PD programs. When the accreditation team came after finishing the self-evaluation report, they recommended taking care of the PD programs because there are no effective PD programs available in this school.
In general, participant comments revealed that the CIS accreditation process continues to offer positive advice to Kuwaiti bilingual international schools on staffing, teacher qualifications, salaries and PD programs, but these recommendations have not been enforced by the CIS accreditation committee and have not been implemented effectively by CIBS and IBS. The lack of implementation of these recommendations, according to comments by stakeholders, has affected the quality of teachers, which has accordingly affected the quality of education in the schools concerned. For example, Mona, the mother of a Grade 12 student at IBS, was very critical of the quality of its English subject teachers, asserting that English lessons are of a very low standard. This view is shared by a parent at IBS, Abdelraheem, who thought that one of the reasons behind low quality teaching is the continuous turnover of teachers at IBS. Figure 8.4 summarises the effects of international accreditation on international schools in Kuwait.

![Figure 8.4](image_url)  
**Figure 8.4** International accreditation effects on international schools in Kuwait
8.5 National educational policies

According to stakeholder perceptions in this study, it was thought that the MOE generally has inadequate regulations, policies and practices to ensure schools follow external authorities’ recommendations relating to the quality of education in international schools in Kuwait. This finding is a direct response to the fourth research supporting question, which seeks an explanation of the role of the MOE in responding to demands for a measurable quality of education.

National educational policies have a role in ensuring the quality of education provided by schools, whether public (government), private or international. It is generally thought to be the responsibility of the government through its ministries and authorities to supervise and manage the education system in each country. “Government policy plays a significant role in mediating how education and society shape one another” (Woo, 2013, p. 37).

There are certain expectations from society, parents and other stakeholders who have interest in the education system in any country, and the school itself regarding the nature of education provided by schools. Some “expectations … are anchored in the law … which the government (acting on behalf of society) imposes on schools and which can be forcibly imposed” (Vanhoof & Van Petegem, 2007, p. 103) to implement certain educational policies, but if “schools fail to meet these expectations the government can – and must – take steps to sanction these schools” (Vanhoof & Van Petegem, 2007, p. 103). Other expectations that are related to the school itself or outside groups, such as universities and international accreditation organisations, are not anchored in local law and cannot be imposed by governments.

In Kuwait, the MOE is responsible for implementing educational policies designed by the government with the aim of ensuring that expectations of society, parents and other stakeholders regarding the quality of education are being met by schools in Kuwait. The quality of education in this study is basically analysed in terms of it as “complying with expectations” (Harrington & Harrington, 1995, as cited in Vanhoof & Van Petegem, 2007,
especially by parents and society. This is the reason why interviews with parents and other key participants in these systems are the principal source of information.

The MOE is responsible for monitoring the quality of all schools, whether public or private, since it recognises their degrees and certifies them for local and international purposes. However, as indicated by the perceptions of stakeholders, the responsibility of quality assurance of international schools in Kuwait is not undertaken primarily by the MOE. Rather, the MOE plays a limited role in the evaluation of international schools, that is, it avoids any effective focus on “policy, legislation and regulations, and educational performance” (Vanhoof & Van Petegem, 2007, p. 4). The MOE, as shown in the analysis, has neither designed nor implemented effective measurements for evaluating international schools. Consequently, its role is limited to monitoring the internal quality assurance of international schools in Kuwait, which makes it difficult to accurately appraise the performance of these schools. In effect, the MOE has transferred the responsibility of investigating and improving the internal quality assurance to international accreditation agencies, such as CIS. According to the MOE HOD, Mubarak (Section 8.4), the MOE has made it compulsory for international schools to seek international accreditation from recognised international agencies. These agencies, as observed by participants, play a major role in assisting international schools to conduct the self-evaluation process (internal quality assurance process):

(This is) largely initiated by the school itself, whereby carefully chosen participants describe and evaluate the functioning of the school in a systematic manner for the purposes of taking decisions or undertaking initiatives in the context of [aspects of] overall school [policy] development. (Van Petegem, 2005, p. 104)

The MOE does not have any direct involvement in the self-evaluation process, a responsibility that is conducted under the supervision of CIS. However, the MOE receives a copy of the accreditation certificate granted by CIS to the accredited schools, as stated by the MOE official, Mubarak (Section 8.4). There is no exercise of control or accountability by the MOE concerning international schools as a consequence of the accreditation process.
There is no follow-up that requires or evaluates any predetermined objectives identified by CIS. Such follow-up is generally assumed to be the responsibility of the government (Vanhoof & Van Petegem, 2007). Accordingly, it is difficult to guarantee integration and, to a certain extent, an appropriate balance between internal and external evaluations of these schools. Necessarily, this affects the quality of education.

The quality of education must be agreed through dialogue by the government, school boards, school management, teaching staff, pupils, parents and the wider community, including religious, business, community and higher education sectors. Quality is relevant at all levels of a school and to all its stakeholders (Hendriks, Doolaard, & Bosker, 2002).

It is important that “forms of monitoring (by the MOE) … have to be devised and schools … have to render account” (Vanhoof & Van Petegem, 2007, p. 111) despite the fact that “the quality of these self-evaluations is … open” (Cousins & Earl, 1995, as cited in Vanhoof & Van Petegem, 2007, p. 111). “It is … quite possible in schools which fear a negative evaluation that there may be instances of putting on a show, window-dressing and spin. There is also a very real risk of self-serving results” (Watling & Arlow, 2002, as cited in Vanhoof & Van Petegem, 2007, p. 109).

This argument is of particular relevance to findings relating to two of the schools in this study: CIBS and IBS. According to the perceptions of stakeholders of CIBS and IBS, both were seen as lacking in internal quality assurance despite having been accredited by CIS for many years. It is clear that CIS cannot play the role of the MOE; it is not its responsibility to follow up on responses to the external evaluation. Consequently, questions need to be asked about the role and focus of the MOE.

In relation to the limited involvement of MOE policies regarding international schools in Kuwait, the analysis of data highlighted four main areas that the MOE is involved with: (i) curriculum; (ii) teacher qualifications; (iii) academic performance; and (iv) government scholarships. A discussion of these areas follows.
8.5.1 Ministry curriculum policies

It is the perception of stakeholders (curriculum coordinators, principals, directors, teachers, parents and others) associated with CBS, CIBS and IBS that the MOE in Kuwait does not provide specific policies regarding the curricula of international schools in Kuwait, apart from bilingual international schools, which are required to teach the national Arabic curriculum. For example, the curriculum coordinator at CBS, Caith, stated:

The Ministry of Education doesn’t bother with the English language subjects, which include science, math, English and any subject we teach in English. However, we use the ministry curriculum for Arabic, social studies, Islamic studies and we have the inspectors come all the time to make sure we are following the ministry curriculum.

Even so, there is only minimal control over the delivery and assessment of Arabic curricula in these bilingual international schools. The principal of CBS, Jalal, pointed out, “For Arabic subjects, they ask to see the end of the semester test but they don’t monitor how they (the school) give(s) the grade or (distribute) the marks.” These schools design weekly, monthly and yearly lesson plans for all Arabic subjects, in addition to their own tests and examinations, which differ from national standard examinations. The only MOE regulations related to Western-language-based curricula in bilingual international schools are censorship guidelines that control the content of textbooks, which must be appropriate for the local culture and Islamic principles. This issue was confirmed by the MOE official, who explained the censorship process:

Censorship is subject to certain conditions and criteria, which don’t conflict with the general policy and the Islamic belief of the country. These two elements are the most important fundamentals in addition to not conflicting with any community in our society, whether Kuwaiti or non-Kuwaiti.

8.5.2 Teacher qualification requirements

According to comments gathered from the interviews of participants associated with the three schools, it is generally thought that the MOE introduced new regulations to ensure the
employment of qualified teachers by international schools in Kuwait, as explained by the MOE official, Mubarak:

They must have certain qualifications, which should be approved by the Ministry. Before employing any teacher, the school should provide the ministry with his/her qualifications, certificates, and experience so that approval can be granted to this teacher to teach in such schools. If any international school employs unqualified teachers, a warning is given to this school and it could be fined.

However, these regulations appear to be inflexible and some teachers are insufficiently qualified while others, who appear to have appropriate qualifications, have been prevented from teaching in Kuwait because their qualifications were not specified on the MOE approval list. In addition, there are no clear MOE regulations regarding the qualifications of academic administrators, such as vice-principals, principals and superintendents. This has resulted in many international schools, including CIBS and IBS, being allowed to promote teachers to these positions without the necessary training or certification. This is a serious matter which affects the school’s improvement. As Waterson argued, “School improvement literature clearly highlights the importance of effective educational leadership as being instrumental in ensuring schools are effective” (2015b, p. 2).

8.5.3 Monitoring academic performance

All stakeholders from CBS, CIBS and IBS shared the same view that the MOE has inadequate systems for effectively monitoring the academic performance of students in Kuwait’s international schools. According to their point of view, the MOE does not require international school students to sit for national or international standardised examinations to evaluate their performance, nor does the MOE actively engage in issues surrounding the quality of education in these schools. It was observed by interviewees that international schools in Kuwait have full control over their examinations and assessment tasks without any interference from the MOE, apart from implementing the Arabic curriculum and requesting a copy of end-of-semester Arabic examinations. Alan, the CIBS principal, commented on this issue:
For all of our subjects in Arabic … there are supervisors from the ministry … observing teachers and meeting with HODs, giving the final approval for … the mid-term exams and the finals. The content is set by them; we do not deviate from that for sure. In the other English subjects … the MOE does not interfere in setting the policies or following certain standards for the English subjects, or choosing a certain curriculum.

8.5.4 Government scholarships

The Kuwaiti government provides various scholarships for Kuwaiti students to study locally and abroad. Although many of these students have a good chance of obtaining these scholarships, the standard and quality of them vary, especially scholarships to study in reputable American and British universities. These scholarships are given to students who achieve a high GPA in government or international schools. However, as shown in the analysis, since there is no proper system to monitor academic performance in international schools in Kuwait, students cannot be assessed equally. Most students in international schools do not sit for national or international standardised tests because schools, such as CIBS and IBS, as shown in the participants’ comments, design their own assessment tasks at a lower level than international assessment programs, such as the IB and AP. However, these courses are required to be taken by CBS students. The counsellor of CBS, Mousa, clearly identified this ‘unbalanced’ situation between Kuwait’s international school students competing for these scholarships. As quoted in Section 5.5.6, Mousa said that parents of struggling students at CBS, who had 1.6 as their GPA, move their children to other international schools where they easily achieve a GPA of 3.4. Hence, there is no equity for international school students competing for government scholarships because there is no proper assessment system in place.

Figure 8.5 summarises the effects of national educational policies on the quality of education in international bilingual schools in Kuwait that teach Arabic and English curricula.
Figure 8.5  Effects of MOE educational policies on international bilingual schools

8.6  Quality of education

There were many factors affecting quality of education in international bilingual schools in Kuwait. According to the stakeholders’ perceptions, these factors include student behaviour, qualified staff (teachers, staff, administration and management), PD programs, non-profit policies, parents’ involvement, and education outcome measurements.

This finding represents the central theme in this study. It reveals stakeholder perspectives of the core issues that determine the quality of education in three schools in this study. All
of these factors were discussed in the previous findings, in relation to quality, from a different viewpoint. In this section, the discussion of quality assurance of education in international schools will be framed by Cheng’s (2003) concept of ‘education quality assurance’.

Cheng’s (2003) educational quality assurance concept is comprised of three types of quality assurance: (i) internal quality; (ii) interface quality; and (iii) future quality. He concluded that these types of quality assurance are essential for an educational institution to have total quality assurance in education:

Although internal quality assurance, interface quality assurance, and future quality assurance are based on different paradigms and they have different strengths and focuses, all of them are important and necessary to provide us with a comprehensive framework to consider and manage education quality in the new century. They are mutually supplementary to one another, taking internal improvement, interface satisfaction and accountability, and future relevance into consideration. (p. 210)

In this study, interface quality assurance and future quality assurance are discussed: (i) interface quality assurance relates to parents’ expectations and satisfaction (Section 8.3); (ii) its connection to national educational policies (Section 8.5); and (iii) future quality assurance in relation to international accreditation findings (Section 8.4). However, a summary discussion is also provided, in addition to internal quality assurance.

8.6.1 Internal quality assurance

Internal quality assurance “focuses mainly on … effort(s) to improve internal school performance, particularly the methods and processes of teaching and learning” (Cheng, 2003, p. 202). For Cheng, one of the models of internal quality assurance focuses on goals and specifications:

(It) assumes that there are clear, enduring, non-native and well-accepted goals and specifications as indicators and standards for education institutions or education systems to pursue or with which to conform. Education quality defined by this model is the achievement of the stated goals or conformance
with the specifications listed in the institutional plan or program plans. (Cheng, 2003, p. 204)

Examples of quality indicators in this model may include students’ academic achievement, numbers of students enrolling in universities, and professional qualifications of staff (Cheng, 2003). For students’ academic achievements that satisfy and meet the expectations of stakeholders, the participants’ comments revealed that academic achievement in bilingual international schools is linked to the expectations of parents. The analysis indicated that most parents shared two expectations: (i) students develop fluent English language skills; and (ii) they be able to function competently by international standards in order to be adequately prepared for Western universities.

In CBS, stakeholders’ comments suggest that students graduate with excellent language skills in Arabic and English. According to Peter, CBS director, many CBS graduates attend prestigious universities abroad, such as Harvard and Stanford, as confirmed by HSP Jalal:

Most of our graduates go to unique and well-known universities around the world. We have students who went to Harvard, MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Stanford. We always have students (winning scholarships) … The MOE (awards) two types of scholarships: regular and merit. If they are accepted by one of the top universities, they get the merit scholarship, which is better than the regular one, and most of our students get merit scholarships. Again, this is one of the reasons why parents want to put their kids in this school because of the results and the outcome.

However, CIBS and IBS students are weaker in English language fluency due to many factors discussed in chapters six and seven. Frequently, students in these two schools are not sufficiently prepared to enter Western universities unless they undertake preparatory or foundation courses because they have not fulfilled their studies related to Science at the high school stage. Osman, a male Grade 12 student at CIBS, explained, “My brother faced a difficult time after he graduated from (CIBS) to a find a university that accepts his high school certificate.” This situation was explained in detail by his father:
The school administration did not take into consideration the future of non-Kuwaiti students because for Kuwaiti students many of them enter Kuwait University and the other ones that decide to study outside Kuwait, especially in the US or UK, the government of Kuwait supports them (by granting) scholarships to study a foundation year or preparatory course before (starting) their degrees. So we approached the administration to find a solution for our case but there was no answer or action. I even suggested (they) give only my son in Grade 12 the required science subjects but they also refused … So after I didn’t get any response from them, I tried to move my second son to another school but it was late and I couldn’t … I moved the third son, who was in grade 8, to another international school so he can get the IB diploma … and applying to universities (will be) easier for him.

Based on the analysis of data gathered, it is asserted in this study that qualified and experienced staff have a valuable role in improving education in international schools in Kuwait, especially if they remain in the school for at least four years. Interviewees assert that CBS has well-qualified and experienced staff who have remained long term due to the school’s policy of offering the highest salaries and allowances in Kuwait, and supporting staff in their PD. The CBS staff members interviewed in this study have worked at CBS for between seven and 27 years, as indicated by staff interviewees and CBS HSP Jalal.

The situation in CIBS is different. Most staff, according to interviewee viewpoints, are not qualified to teach in international schools because they are non-native English speakers from Arabic backgrounds without teaching qualifications. Tyseer, Head of the English Department at CIBS, commented, “From what I’ve seen so far, from the field teachers, at least in my department, the majority of them are not qualified teachers; they have degrees but they are not qualified teachers.” The administration tried to change this situation by recruiting additional qualified teachers in the year of data collection, but they failed to retain them because, according to teachers interviewed, there was a lack of respectful, professional treatment from the school’s administration and management. According to the recruiters of those teachers, who were mediators between the school and teachers, the administration, due to a lack of experience, was unable to foster effective working relationships between newly-recruited, qualified teachers and existing staff. Many problems were caused by existing staff and teachers, who were mostly unqualified, for example,
existing unqualified staff members prevented changes being introduced by new qualified and experienced staff members. In addition, the management did not provide adequate housing, transportation and other allowances to newly-recruited staff, and many of them found it difficult to continue working in such an environment, especially as most were new to Kuwait.

For IBS, according to my insider knowledge, having worked there for seven years, there is a minority of qualified Western native English-speaking staff, but they have not gained wide experienced in teaching at IBS because they stay for only two years due to remuneration of low salaries and allowances. Asera, the CIBS accreditation coordinator, commented, “The CIS committee recommended that, in order to retain staff and reduce turnover, the school has to review the salaries and benefit packages” but there is no evidence that IBS reviewed its staff salaries and benefits because the turnover of teachers remains high. In addition, the school environment does not inspire teachers to stay long as they are not supported by the administration in dealing with students and parents. King, an English teacher at IBS, spoke of this situation, “It’s a struggle with senior management because parents use their strong connection with the management … so they settle … (the students’ problems) without dealing with student behaviour properly.”

8.6.2 Interface quality assurance

Interface quality assurance “emphasises interface effectiveness in terms of education quality, stakeholders’ satisfaction, and accountability to the public” (Cheng, 2003, p. 204). Cheng (2003) listed some measures to ensure the a high quality of education in this area of quality assurance:

Institutional monitoring, institutional self-evaluation, quality inspection, use of quality indicators and benchmarks, survey of key stakeholders’ satisfaction, accountability reporting to the community, parental and community involvement in school governance, institutional development planning, school chatter, and performance-based funding are some typical measures used to ensure interface quality in education. (p. 206)
Institutional monitoring, institutional self-evaluation, quality inspection, use of quality indicators and benchmarks, stakeholder/parent satisfaction, accountability reporting to the community (through the MOE) and institutional development planning are discussed in-depth in previous sections that relate to parental choice, accreditation measures and MOE policies. Regarding parental involvement in the schools, it was found that stakeholders generally consider it to have a positive influence on the school, as in the case of CBS, where parents were given direct responsibilities and invited to play a major role in the direct management of the school to support it by any means possible. For example, the chairperson, whom I interviewed, was a parent and also two other parents I interviewed were board members. However, the situation in CIBS and IBS is different. In CIBS, the board of management does not cooperate with the parents’ committee and generally disregards their recommendations, as Mohsen, a parent at CIBS and a member of its parents’ committee for many years, described the situation:

There were many parents highly qualified in the field of education with us in the committee and we used to discuss many important issues and (made) many recommendations to be implemented by the administration. (However), we never got any responses … to our recommendations and this was strange.

For IBS, parental involvement is limited to the parents’ committee, which has limited impact on the school’s management and policy. Abdelraheem, a parent and parents’ committee member at IBS, described his frustration with the management, “In the parents’ committee, we were surprised by the amount of profit (IBS) makes. We told them many times that we are not against making profit but at the same time (IBS) should improve the (quality of) education.”

There are also many quality indicators at this level of quality assurance, some of which may include “high quality student intake, more qualified staff recruited, better facilities and equipment, better staff/student ratio” (Cheng, 2003, p. 206). Regarding facilities and equipment, all three schools have facilities and equipment appropriate to the environment of Kuwait in the context of international schooling. They have suitably-sized air-conditioned classrooms, laboratories, playgrounds, sport fields, gyms, libraries and theatres.
With regard to the staff/student ratio, there were no complaints and generally the ratio was seen as appropriate. However, the quality of students and staff (teachers, administration and management) was significant, as indicated by interviewees, and appears to be a major contributor to differences between a high quality international school (CBS) and schools of a lower standard (CIBS and IBS).

For the quality of students according to the teachers’ perspectives, it was clear from the analysis that student behaviour has a direct impact on the quality of education at the schools in this study. For example, at CBS, where a high level of education is experienced, students are seen to be committed to their studies; they interact respectfully with their teachers. CBS administration has firm, effective disciplinary policies in place to deal with any incident of misbehaviour. In contrast, problematic student behaviour exists at CIBS and IBS. CIBS students challenge their teachers, who do not receive support from the administration to deal with such situations. Murad, a teacher who taught at CBS and CIBS, spoke of the difference between the two regarding student behaviour:

(Many) CIBS students … behave improperly. Their dealing with the teachers depends on the character of the teacher and whether he or she allows them to misbehave or is firm in class … The problem with CIBS is that the system there doesn’t protect or support the teacher in cases … of students misbehaving. As a result, the teacher (is) put in a difficult situation … because there was no presence of the administration in such situations where class management and students’ discipline is needed. In CBS, the situation is totally different; the school management and administration are very firm. There is severe punishment for students (who) tried to disrespect teachers in anyway. The parent will be forced to apologise to the teacher if his son or daughter (has) disrespectful behaviour … Respecting the teacher is essential in this school and this (allows) … the teacher (to) work confidently and efficiently … This school is a teachers’ oasis where their dignity, ideas and knowledge are respected and protected. No (teacher) is insulted in this school.

In IBS, according to its teachers and counsellor, it is difficult to control misbehaving students, and this affects teaching and creativity. The counsellor at IBS, Anne, commented, “We find the students, academically and behaviourally, don’t take responsibility. We
struggle with this challenge to make them take responsibility and be accountable for their actions.”

According to the participants’ perceptions regarding the quality of teachers, teachers have a major role in improving education if appropriate circumstances are present at the school. For example, at CBS, teachers are considered the main asset of the school and are highly valued by administrators and parents. CBS teachers have a healthy relationship with the parent community, which leads to a positive effect on the school, as explained in the CBS case study. CBS teachers are independent and have full authority over their teaching and use of resources. They are treated with dignity and equity regardless of their background, especially concerning salaries and allowances. CBS teachers are well trained and the administration provides them with high quality PD programs to improve their teaching and deliver the curriculum effectively. Accordingly, interviewees reported that CBS teachers stay at the school for a long time, and this is seen to create stability and have a positive impact on the education provided to students.

According to those interviewed, the CIBS administration is not supportive when teachers are challenged by students or parents. Teachers do not have control over their lesson planning or teaching methods. Additionally, the workload for teachers is high and does not enable them to complete their work efficiently and effectively. Another factor affecting teacher productivity and continuity at CIBS is the inequality of teacher salaries and allowances. I experienced this issue when I worked at CIBS. An interview with Renee, who recruited teachers for CIBS in the same year of data collection, and therefore had knowledge of the salaries paid, also revealed this. She said she advised the administration to have only one pay scale for all teachers.

For IBS, as shown in the participants’ comments in the analysis, the high turnover of teachers is a major concern in determining the quality of education provided by the school. Many teachers leave within two years; one reason for this high turnover is the low pay scale. In addition, teachers report that they are not provided with enough resources to use in the classroom and PD programs operate at an unsatisfactory level. Interviewees also
observed that teachers are not adequately supported by the administration when dealing with students who misbehave, therefore, they cannot focus solely on teaching.

Regarding the quality of administration, which includes principals, vice-principals and staff that assist them, it is evident that qualified academic administration, superintendents, principals and assistant principals play a central role in managing the school’s academic affairs effectively and professionally. From stakeholders’ comments, the analysis of CBS showed that employing a qualified administrative team is a key factor in improving the quality of education. CBS administrators are seen as well qualified, trained and experienced Westerners with higher degrees in education. There is only one non-Western principal at CBS, but he is experienced and well qualified, having graduated and obtained his degrees from the USA. The school is successful in the long-term retention of administrators, some of whom have remained in their posts for more than 10 years. This is seen to have a positive effect on the quality of education at the school.

In contrast, administrators in CIBS and IBS are not qualified or experienced. Therefore, this deficiency affects the quality of education provided in these schools. In CIBS, most administrators are from an Arabic background with Arabic qualifications; they have not attained educational certification, educational management training or other forms of training that is appropriate for an international school with a Western curriculum.

In IBS, academic administrators are perceived as not qualified or trained to be administrators. Generally, they have been promoted without proper training or passing governance courses. The school suffers from a continual change in administration staff. IBS parents have complained about this issue as it affects the quality of education in the school, as Abdelraheem, a parent at IBS, commented, “The noticeable problem here is the continuous change of owners and administration.” Parents also claimed that administration does not function properly because they are not independent from the management authority, as explained by Samer, a parent at IBS, “The administration is not as responsible as it should be because the owners keep putting pressure on the administrators and not giving them the required authority to function properly.” As an insider who worked there
for seven years, I found this claim is true to a certain extent compared to the situation at CBS.

For quality management in this study, the term ‘management’ refers to the school board, which is in charge of school management and governance. The analysis showed that management team member qualifications and experience are seen to have a significant relationship to the quality of education in international schools in Kuwait. This is in accordance with the assertion that “school improvement literature clearly highlights the importance of effective educational leadership … in ensuring schools are effective” (Waterson, 2015, p. 15).

The CBS board is described by Mary, the chairperson of CBS, as a ‘true school board’ because all members are chosen for their experience and qualifications, and most are parents, former parents or alumni. The owner has only one representative on the board. The board’s main goal is claimed to be achieving the highest standard of education. It is unusual to find such a school board in Kuwait, because most independent schools are governed by the school’s owners.

In contrast, according to the school’s website and also to parent Muhanned, who is the Head of the CIBS Islamic Department and is related to the chairwoman, the CIBS board is comprised of the same people who established the school. They are not known to the parents’ committee. According to Mohsen, who has been a parent and a board member at CIBS for 15 years, “After 15 years in this school, I have no idea who the (decision makers) are in this school. They are not known and they never met with the parents’ committee.” From Mohsen’s perspective, they have not been cooperative in dealing with the committee’s suggestions to improve the school, “All suggestions and recommendations of the parents’ committee were always sent to the board so they … (could) take action accordingly, but I didn’t see or notice any action … taken as a result of our recommendations.”
The IBS board members are also not qualified to lead an educational institution. Most represent the investment company that is the majority shareholder in the school, as shown on the school’s website that mentions board members’ identities. This is also confirmed by my knowledge as an insider who worked there at the time when the company bought IBS. Their qualifications are in business and investment, and their goal as shareholders is to increase profit. One member of the parents’ committee, Abdelraheem, stated, “Owners buy the school for a certain amount, and their plan is to gain the same amount or more in a short time. The main aim for them is how to obtain as much profit as they can.”

Another model of interface quality assurance is the legitimacy model, which “often relies on … interface activities and achievements such as building up public relations, marketing institutional strengths, ensuring institutional accountability to the public, and promoting institutional image, reputation and status in the community” (Cheng, 2003, p. 206).

A key factor in the promotion of the institutional image and reputational status of international schools in the community of Kuwait is their accreditation by an international accreditation agency. International accreditation was, and still is, considered necessary and important for all stakeholders involved in international schools in Kuwait and in the community represented by the MOE to assess international schools’ education quality.

An additional model of interface quality assurance is the organisational learning model, which “assumes that, responding to changing environment, education quality is a dynamic concept, involving continuous improvement and development of members, practices, process, and outcomes of an education institution” (Cheng, 2003, p. 207). The element of continuous improvement and development of members, practices, processes and outcomes of an educational institution is one of the main factors in this study that differentiates between high and low quality of education. The analysis showed that stakeholders view PD programs as having a direct link to the improvement of education in the schools where they are adopted. For example, at CBS there are many creative and distinguished PD programs that are not available in most international schools in Kuwait and the Gulf region. The quality of education at CBS is constantly improving as a result of its high standard of PD.
programs for teachers and staff, as well as a policy of sending staff abroad for training, as experienced by Murad, a science teacher:

Teachers here can apply to the administration to go anywhere in the world to attend any course or program he/she needs to improve his/her skills needed for the job. The school mostly approves such applications and pays generously for all expenses during the course or program time. This is evidence of how (CBS) values the professional development of staff.

CBS has a well-organised orientation program for new teachers to prepare them for the local culture and new school environment. In addition, the school organises creative PD programs, such as an orientation program for all expatriate teachers coming to Kuwait, Master of Education programs, and an education conference that invites 50 presenters from around the world, as explained by the PD coordinator at CBS, Lina:

I do conferences every two years. I have 51 presenters, we invite 30 schools, and we do it every two years … 2010 was the first one and we did (it in) 2012 and 2014, we invited presenters from outside and this year we invited Kuwait University to send somebody.

These programs are possible, as Lina indicated, because of the support of the management team, which aims for CBS to provide the highest standard of education possible. She commented:

Our board of trustees are wonderful … as long as they can see that what we are doing makes a difference for our children … and teachers (so) teachers will stay in the school where things have the chance to grow.

In contrast, CIBS and IBS do not have appropriate PD programs despite being accredited for many years. In CIBS, many teachers and staff expressed disappointment with the lack of attention to PD programs and the low budget allocated. Although the situation at IBS is similar, their management has promised to increase the PD budget at the request of CIS, as indicated by the IB accreditation coordinator, Asera, “This year, the board agreed to raise
the PD budget to 150000 KD. The CIS recommendation stated that if you want quality of education, you should have … effective professional development programs.”

8.6.3 Future quality assurance

Future quality assurance “emphasises strongly future effectiveness in terms of relevance to the new paradigm of education concerning contextualised multiple intelligences, globalisation, localisation and individualisation” (Cheng, 2003, p. 203).

Individualised learning is focused on the student, whom the school deals with at the centre of education, whereby self-learning with appropriate guidance and facilitation is the main priority. Students are encouraged to be self-reliant when learning and choosing the most suitable method for their personal needs to improve their education. Students are also encouraged to pursue the latest innovative technological and learning opportunities in a self-rewarding learning process. According to CIS accreditation standards (CIS, 2013, p. 7), a learner-centred approach is favoured and schools are advised to follow this approach to teaching and learning. Differentiation, which involves using a variety of teaching methods and approaches to suit different personal characters and abilities of students, is also a main focus in the accreditation standards (CIS, 2013, p. 7), and schools are asked to follow such teaching guidelines. CBS, which has been accredited for at least 25 years, has a strict policy of implementing accreditation standards and recommendations appropriately, as explained by Murad, a science teacher at CBS:

The teaching methods and styles in CBS were appraised (positively) by CIS because they constitute a variety of methods. The major exams have fewer marks, and the students’ group activities and projects have a big percentage of marks. The students in this school have many activities, projects, specific periods to study whatever they wish, visits to different places, presentations, movies makers, and a big variety of activities that I don’t think are available in any other school.

Students were found to be independent in their education, learning through a variety of methods, subjects and extracurricular activities, all of which were facilitated by the school, as HSP Jalal, pointed out:
One reason why more parents try to put their kids in the school is our strong, rich extra curricula activities … We have different sport teams that compete in Kuwait and overseas. The teams travelled many times. In addition to sports, we have academic competitions. (For example), we have a strong Model United Nations and debating. Students do a lot of community service like beach clean-up and visiting hospitals. National Inner Society and senior council are very strong here, and they do a lot of activities, in addition to different student groups like those taking care of the environment. We also have a robotics group which competes in building robotics. In the high school, you rarely find a student that has no activity, meaning either they do sport, MUN, debating or just community service. So students are busy.

On the contrary, the situation in CIBS and IBS is different. In CIBS, teaching and learning mostly uses a teacher-centred approach. In effect, a traditional way of teaching is followed where students ‘absorb’ knowledge from their teachers and depend on them to summarise the textbook so that they can pass the examination, as CIBS parent Mohsen pointed out:

The problem here is that they only study small parts of these textbooks and they do not have the culture of making the students depend on themselves by reading their textbooks, which is the worst (practice). Instead of (reading independently), the students depend on summaries provided by teachers.

However, in 2014/2015, the school employed a training company to prepare its teachers to use differentiation techniques in teaching, as the HSP for girls, Alana, explained:

(We invited) a local company and we did multiple intelligence tests for the students, which will be given again this year, administration classes, how to do certain techniques to push our teachers to be facilitators and no longer impartial information. (The goal is) critical thinking (and) independent (learning). We need our students to be accountable for what they learned. It takes effort.

In IBS, students are encouraged to be independent in their learning. However, the school does not facilitate the required resources and skills for students and teachers to improve in this area, according to English teacher, Clare, who commented on the needs of students, “We meet the needs of the lower students, but … the higher level students can use more of the challenge, maybe higher level classes, that type of thing, AP classes.” She also
mentioned the need for more resources, “I can use more resources and textbooks … (As) an English teacher, I need more interesting and appropriate reading materials.”

IBS and CIBS offer a limited choice of elective subjects and extracurricular activities for students, which reduces their opportunity to study subjects they may favour or maybe central to their future imagined careers.

Concerning localised and globalised learning, Cheng (2003) argued:

Students and their learning should be globalised and localised in such a way that local and global resources, support, and networks can be brought in to create and materialise the opportunities for students' developments during their learning process. Through localisation and globalisation, students can learn from multiple sources inside and outside their schools, locally and globally, not limited to a small number of teachers in their schools. Participation in local and international learning programs can help them achieve the community experiences and global outlook beyond schools. (p. 208)

Indeed, in the case of bilingual international schools in Kuwait, they are ideally suited to combine both localised and globalised learning. In CBS, CIBS and IBS, there are two curricula taught concurrently: (i) local Arabic curriculum; and (ii) international (American/Canadian) curriculum. The observations of the following participants offered insight:

Zainah (CIBS director): For our educational policy, we adopted an American curriculum with a focus on Arabic identity and Islamic values and memorising the Quran.

Peter (CBS director): Taking or setting aside the Arabic curriculum since the ministry provides it, our English curriculum comes from two sources. Our Language-Arts comes from Canada … We use … common core for Math and Science and we are also an AP school. AP stands for Advanced Placement program.

Salam (IBS HSP and director): We follow the common core American curriculum.
Faten (IBS curriculum coordinator): Actually in Arabic subjects, the entire curriculum comes from the ministry; basically the teachers don’t have any input into it.

Alan (CIBS principal): All of our subjects in Arabic, like the Arabic language, Islamic studies and social studies, are regulated by the ministry: the curriculum and the books.

Despite different levels of the quality of implementation of both curricula at these schools, students have the opportunity to experience localised and globalised learning. They are taught in both languages, Arabic and English, through local and international textbooks and resources by local and international (Western) teachers. This rich environment increases the chance for students to improve themselves and gain better future opportunities locally and internationally. If implemented actively in these accredited schools, bilingual education is a significant factor:

(In) ensuring that the outcomes of learning and teaching are fundamentally relevant to the development of students' contextualised multiple intelligences, including technological, economic, social, political, cultural, and learning intelligences that are crucial for them to meet the challenges in the future. (Cheng, 2003, p. 210)

An ideal example of successful localised and globalised learning is CBS, which has created an effective balance between implementing curricula, both local and international, and providing adequate resources to ensure that “students can learn from world-class teachers, experts, peers, and learning materials from different parts of the world. In other words, their learning can be a world-class learning” (Cheng, 2003, p. 209). However, for CIBS and IBS, the success of globalised learning is limited, and to a certain extent their, focus continues to be on localised learning, which affects future global opportunities for the school and students.

Figure 8.6 summarises the quality assurance model and its components in relation to this study.
Figure 8.7  Quality assurance model of this study
8.7 Conclusion

From the findings and discussion in this chapter, it is concluded that in the three international bilingual schools in Kuwait in this study, the quality of education depends on, and is related to, many factors. In many ways, these factors are a consequence of the prioritisation of profit, which has been highly influential in the establishment of international schools in Kuwait. This has arisen alongside parents’ expectations and involvement, international accreditation quality measures, and national educational policies. It was found that achieving quality education in an international bilingual school in Kuwait is possible, as indicated in the case of CBS, if these factors are managed in a way that serves the quality assurance of education. According to those interviewed for this research, graduate students from CBS are able to compete internationally at many levels to the extent of being offered scholarships from prestigious universities worldwide. It is a rare occurrence for a Kuwaiti student to be awarded a scholarship directly from these universities, yet they received full scholarships, as Murad, a science teacher at CBS, explained:

In CBS, the parents see that both the teachers and students work very hard and achieve excellent results and high marks which enable them to enter the best universities in the world. This raised the reputation of this school internationally. I experienced this situation myself with my students last year. I taught six students the AP course in physics and two of them achieved the full mark in the AP exam, which enabled them to receive a full scholarship in the US.

The connection between the main findings and theoretical frameworks was clarified in this chapter, but indeed, the broader context became very clear during the discussion of the core theme of this study: quality of education. There is no doubt that globalisation, cosmopolitanism and neoliberalism are connected and related to this study, but the analysis of quality assurance elements in education enabled the discussion of findings to reveal deeper insights into education quality in international bilingual schools in Kuwait. The quality assurance model provides a clear picture of the extent of the quality of education in the schools in this study as it connects the quality of education to the main elements
researched in this study: satisfaction of parents, accountability to the community (MOE), legitimacy and improvement in relation to international accreditation, and the importance of globalised learning.
Chapter Nine: Summary, Implications, and Recommendations

9.1 Introduction

Chapter Nine reflects on my research journey and summarises this study. It also discusses the strengths of the research and concludes with recommendations and implications for policy, practice and future studies.

The chapter is divided into five sections. First, a description of my research journey is outlined in terms of the assumptions I brought with me to this research, and how I chose certain theoretical frameworks to analyse and interpret the perspectives of participants in this study. Second, a summary of the thesis describing an overview of the study’s aims and key findings is presented. Third, the significance of the research is discussed in relation to the area of research, theories and conceptual frameworks used, number and categories of participants, and research methodology and data collection methods. The fourth section covers the implications of the research and recommendations for better quality education in international schools in Kuwait. Fifth, areas for further research are proposed.

9.2 Research journey

My research journey started after I encountered a research problem while teaching in accredited international schools in Kuwait. The research problem was related to the quality of education in these schools, especially as they are accredited by the MOE and international accreditation organisations. There were many negative elements of incompetence and weaknesses in the education process and output of international schools I taught in and experienced in Kuwait. The quality of students graduated from these schools were below expectations especially when they enrol in Western universities outside Kuwait. My initial perspective about this issue focused on the international accreditation process and its effectiveness in ensuring the quality of education in these schools. My assumption was that international accreditation agencies should have the lead role in improving the quality of education in international schools in Kuwait. I questioned the
teaching and learning processes, as well as other factors in relation to the quality of staff in such schools. In addition, the role of the MOE in monitoring the academic performance of students was vague despite verifying their certificates from these schools and allowing them to join Kuwaiti universities and colleges.

Thus, before I commenced study in Australia, the aim of my research study was to investigate the quality of education in international schools in Kuwait in response to what I had experienced and observed in these schools for many years. The intention, then, was to focus only on the international accreditation process and its effectiveness. After commencing my PhD study in Australia and meeting with my supervisors, I decided to widen my research and include additional areas of investigation (rapid growth of international schools in Kuwait, and parental choices and satisfaction with international schools in Kuwait) because of their relevance to the core elements of my study. This would present a more inclusive picture of the main theme of the study: The quality of education in international schools in Kuwait.

For the research paradigm, following meetings and discussions with my supervisors and after reading many articles and books, cosmopolitanism and neoliberalism were initially chosen as theoretical frameworks to guide my research and analysis in this study. However, despite being important and relevant to my research, both theoretical frameworks were insufficient to guide my research and analysis of the quality of education in international schools in Kuwait. Therefore, I read extensively about the quality of education in schools to discover how to analyse the quality situation accurately in schools in this study. By accurately, I mean evaluating and analysing elements that could affect the quality of education in these schools and not focusing only on one aspect. For example, elements of academic achievement, parental expectations and satisfaction, parental involvement in schools, monitoring and evaluation of school policies, teaching and learning processes, and local and globalised knowledge are considered important areas to observe as part of quality assurance of education in this study. After researching extensively for an appropriate framework to analyse the quality of education in this sense, Cheng’s (2003) concept of quality assurance of education was chosen for this study because firstly it suits the data.
collected in this study and it covers all the major areas and factors that may affect the education process in international schools in Kuwait. Using his concept was also suitable because there are elements of connection and relationship to cosmopolitanism and neoliberalism theoretical frameworks (international curriculum, international accreditation, and national educational policies), which aid in understanding many aspects of international schools in Kuwait.

9.3 **Summary of the thesis**

Figure 9.1 presents a summary of this research study.
**Quality International Schools in Kuwait? History, Ideology and Practice**

**Research questions**
- Research question: What priorities govern the development of international schools in Kuwait?
- Research supporting sub-questions:
  1. What core factors contributed to the emergence and rapid growth of international schools in Kuwait?
  2. Why do some Kuwaiti parents choose international schools in Kuwait for their children? To what extent do their experiences meet their expectations?
  3. How do considerations around accreditation influence the organisation and practice of international schools in Kuwait?
  4. How do international schools respond to requirements from official bodies, such as the MOE's demands for 'quality education' in international schools in Kuwait?

**Setting and participants**
- **International schools in Kuwait:**
  - CBS: Students (8), teachers (3), parents (3), counsellor (1), curriculum & accreditation coordinator (1), PD coordinator (1), principal (1), director (1), chairperson (1)
  - CIS: Students (14), teachers (2), parents (3), counsellor (1), curriculum & PD coordinator (1), accreditation coordinator (1), principal (2), director (1), chairperson (1), CIS officer (1)
  - IBS: Students (7), teachers (2), parents (4), counsellor (1), curriculum coordinator (1), accreditation & PD coordinator (1), principal & director (1), chairperson (1)
- MOE official (1)

**Data collection and analysis**
- Research methodology: Ethnographic research
- Research methods: Insider knowledge, field notes, focus group interviews, semi-structured interviews
- Research themes: History and rapid growth, parents' choice and satisfaction, curriculum and school system, national education policies, accreditation and accountability policies, quality of education

**Findings and theoretical lens**
- Finding 1: Economic growth, poor education in public schools, national education policies, and high-profit returns are the main causes of the rapid growth of international bilingual schools in Kuwait.
- Finding 2: Bilingual education, English proficiency, and attending Western universities are the parents' reasons for choosing international bilingual schools.
- Finding 3: International accreditation has a positive effect on international schools in Kuwait but its recommendations are not enforced.
- Finding 4: The MOE has limited regulations and policies to ensure the quality of education in international schools in Kuwait.
- Finding 5: The major factors that affected quality of education in this study are student behaviour, staff qualifications, PD programs, non-profit policy, parent involvement and education outcome measurements.
- Theoretical frameworks: Neoliberalism, cosmopolitanism, education quality assurance

**Figure 9.1 Summary of the research study**
This study aims to investigate the quality of education in three accredited international schools in Kuwait: CIBS, CBS and IBS. The first necessary element of investigation was the history of international schools in Kuwait in general, and the three schools in this study specifically. This is because, on the one hand, there were no research and studies that could aid my investigation, and on the other hand, the history of these schools reveals important data that describe the main purpose of establishing such schools, which may serve the quality of their education. For example, international schools, such as IBS, that were established as for-profit schools try to generate as much income as possible, even if it compromises improving the quality of their education. Investigating the history of international schools in Kuwait was necessary because it revealed important information in regard to this study that most international schools in Kuwait were established at a fast rate after the first Gulf War in 1990, when Kuwait was liberated from Iraqi occupation. After the war, in which most main sectors (e.g. health and education) of Kuwait were clearly ineffective (Chapin, 1993) and looking at neoliberal principles (Ball, 2012), the situation in Kuwait was suitable for international schools (especially bilingual international schools) to increase exponentially as one aspect of the privatisation of education in Kuwait.

According to evidence in this study, parents of students and business people were the main drivers behind the rapid growth of international schools in Kuwait. The Kuwaiti government, through the MOE, was the facilitator for such schools to be established. In this case, according to neoliberalism understanding, these schools became a matter of ‘consumer choice’ and the marketing of these schools has a key role in improving the education system (Woo, 2013). However, as demonstrated in the analysis, IBS and CIBS expanded rapidly and profitably but their academic achievement is limited. Therefore, focusing mainly on achieving profits and not investing back into improving the school, as analysed in this study in CIBS and IBS, has a negative effect on the quality of education in these schools. However, CBS was established and still running as a not-for-profit school. The analysis showed that they achieved a high standard of international education, which enabled their graduates to compete and enter distinguished universities throughout the world, such as Stanford.
Another important element of investigation in this study, which constitutes an essential part of the quality of education in these schools, is the parents’ expectations and satisfaction. In this study, parents were found to be pragmatic cosmopolitans who consider the education in these schools as capital, which will help preserve their social status and secure their future (Cambridge, 2003). Parents generally have three common expectations when placing their children in bilingual international schools. They expect their children to graduate with fluent English language skills, to be well prepared to attend Western universities, and to keep their Islamic Arabic identity, which includes maintaining competent Arabic language skills. For CIBS parents, despite acknowledging that the school obviously lacks in preparing their children for Western universities and acquiring appropriate English language skills, they still consider that a conservative Islamic context, as in CIBS, is a priority. At IBS, parents were critical of the cultural atmosphere, being not conservative enough, and of the low quality of education. The level of English language skills was below expectation but better than the government school level. IBS also lacks in preparing students to enter Western universities; they are required to study a foundation year before they commence university. However, CBS parents were satisfied with the outcomes their children were able to achieve. They acquired a high level of English language skills, developed many personal skills, and were successful in achieving good results at Western universities.

The third major element of investigation that assists in understanding the situation of the quality of education in international schools in this study is the influence of international accreditation agencies on these schools. The analysis of CBS, CIBS and IBS, which are accredited by CIS, showed that international accreditation has affected these schools positively by promoting these schools nationally and internationally (Cambridge & Thompson, 2004). International accreditation, which is considered one of the commanding forces of neoliberalism (Baltodano, 2012), is valued as quality assurance of international education for these schools (Keller, 2015). According to the analysis in this study, the international accreditation process in these schools has a key role in designing and adopting appropriate international curriculum, improving assessment methods and techniques to
focus on skills and implementation of knowledge, and recommending the employment of qualified teachers. However, these recommendations and suggestions are not always implemented effectively, as in the case of CIBS and IBS, they had not been enforced by the accreditation agency, CIS, and therefore, try to increase their profit by not spending on, and investing in, salaries and resources.

The fourth important area of investigation, which has a direct relation to the quality of education in international schools in Kuwait, is the role of the MOE to design educational policies that monitor academic performance and ensure quality education, however, according to participants’ perceptions, they are inadequate. In this study, it is necessary for the quality of education to comply with expectations of parents and stakeholders who are involved in the international schools in Kuwait. The MOE is responsible for ensuring that expectations with regard to quality education in these schools are implemented (Vanhoof & Van Petegem, 2007). According to the analysis, it was found that the MOE’s role in this aspect is limited because there are no effective regulations or legislation to monitor the educational performance of these schools. International schools in Kuwait have exclusive control over their assessment tasks and examinations without scrutiny from the MOE.

In addition to the discussion above, according to participant perceptions, there are certain factors that affect the quality of education in the three schools researched in this study: (i) student behaviour; (ii) qualified staff, PD programs; and (iii) parental involvement.

Student behaviour, as shown in the analysis, has a major impact on the quality of education in the schools under study. For example, CBS students interact respectfully with their teachers and are seen to be serious about their learning. Their teachers praise them for such behaviour and consider it to be a major factor of becoming a successful student. In contrast, CIBS and IBS students are difficult to control because they challenge their teachers, which negatively affects teaching and creativity in the classroom.

For staff of these schools, it is asserted in this research that experienced and qualified teachers and administrators have a major role to play in achieving a high standard of
education, especially if they are to stay at the school for many years. This situation exists in CBS, which has a reputation for high quality education standards. However, in CIBS and IBS, most staff members are not fully qualified to teach or work in such schools and qualified staff do not stay long at these schools. This situation, according to parents and students, had a considerable effect on the quality of education in these schools.

Professional development (PD) programs stood out as one of the main differentiating factors between high and low standards of education in this study. PD programs ensure the continuous improvement and development of staff members, practices, education processes and outcomes of the school. At CBS, the quality of education is improving constantly as a result of continually improving and expanding its PD programs. In contrast, CIBS and IBS, according to the analysis, do not execute proper PD programs, which makes it difficult to improve teachers and staff who expressed disappointment with the situation.

According to the analysis of this study, it was found that parental involvement in the school, as in CBS, has a constructive influence on education. CBS parents are given direct roles in management and added responsibilities. However, in CIBS and IBS parental involvement is limited and the board of management of both schools does not cooperate with the parents’ committee; a lack of support created an atmosphere of distrust between parents and the school management.

### 9.4 Significance of the research

The study is significant in many ways. Firstly, the phenomenon of international schools in Kuwait has not been comprehensively researched as this research fills the gap. Secondly, theories and conceptual frameworks that are used and the way they are connected in this research are distinctive. Thirdly, the number and category of participants are unique in that they represent most stakeholder groups involved in these schools. Finally, the methodology and data collection are valuable due to insights generated from this research.

Research studies about international schools and international education in Kuwait are limited, scarce and difficult to access, even if they do exist. This important educational
sector, which is growing rapidly in Kuwait and internationally, as explained in detail in Chapter Two, has major roles and effects locally (Kuwait), regionally (the Gulf) and internationally. International schools worldwide are connected through international networks, for example, international accreditation organisations, and their effects internationally are increasing rapidly as part of globalisation. Therefore, investigating and investing in international schools in Kuwait is significant as they form part of a global network of international schools.

The study also explores bilingual international schools in Kuwait, which contribute to a comprehensive understanding of, or a whole picture of, these schools. Through examining the quality of education in bilingual international schools in Kuwait, the researcher investigated the history of these schools and their exponential growth, the parents’ reasons for choosing these schools and their satisfaction, the international accreditation process and its role in connection to these schools, the national educational policies and regulations of Kuwait in regard to bilingual international schools in Kuwait, the curriculum and school system of these schools, and teaching and learning processes in such schools. These areas were analysed and discussed and their connection is explained in the Chapter 8 and linked to a quality assurance model that clarifies this relationship. This model can be used and adapted to analyse and examine the quality of education in any international school throughout the world.

The theories (cosmopolitanism and neoliberalism) and the conceptual framework (quality assurance of education) used and examined in this study to explain the phenomenon of bilingual international schools in Kuwait are of value because they can help to understand the nature and quality of these schools. Neoliberalism was used in this study to explain the market-driven rationale for establishing international schools, the MOE’s role in facilitating the establishment of international schools in Kuwait, and the effect of international accreditation agencies (CIS in this study) on the privatisation of education and on international schools in Kuwait. Cosmopolitanism was used to analyse the parents’ choices and expectations of bilingual international schools in Kuwait and to examine the aspects of dedicated and pragmatic cosmopolitans regarding the parents in this study.
Cosmopolitanism is also used to understand the role of the international accreditation agency, CIS, in relation to supporting intercultural understanding in the schools in this study. The education quality assurance concept (Cheng, 2003) was an appropriate choice to examine the quality of education in this study because it includes three elements of quality assurance (internal, interface, and future), which suit the case studies of international schools in Kuwait and cover the main areas of investigation in this study. Internal quality assurance is used to understand the nature and measure of student academic achievements, and to explain the effect of qualified and experienced staff (teachers, administration and management) on education in these schools. Interface quality assurance is utilised to determine the importance of parental involvement in the schools, international accreditation quality measures, appropriate national educational policies and regulations, and satisfying parents’ expectations in affecting the quality of education in international schools in Kuwait. Future quality assurance is applied to explain the value of Arabic and international curricula, progressive pedagogy on the education of students in these schools, and on their future careers.

The number and variety of categories of participants in this study increases the significance of this research. Since the researcher is investigating many major areas of international schools in Kuwait and in various directions, there was a need to interview different categories of participants who represent most stakeholders involved in these schools. Therefore, students, parents, teachers, counsellors, PD coordinators, curriculum coordinators, accreditation coordinators, principals, superintendents (or directors) and chairpersons from each school in the case studies were interviewed. Additionally, the MOE HOD and CIS departmental director were also interviewed. Interviewing all participants was a difficult and long process, but the experience of planning, arranging and interviewing them was rich and aided in a deeper understanding of the current situation of these schools.

With a range of categories for participants in the three case studies (schools), I dealt with diverse meanings and perspectives from stakeholders. Not only did I have to listen to them attentively, but I had to develop insight from the information they provided about the significance these schools carry in the context of Kuwait. The researcher, with his insider
knowledge as explained in Chapter Four, approached and initiated processes of data collection, interaction with and interviewing of participants, analysing the data, and interpreting the findings to gain a clear understanding into the circumstances under study. The use of ethnographic qualitative research methodology to investigate many aspects of international schools in Kuwait and collect extensive data enabled the researcher to constitute the emerging meaning by not only listening to participants’ interpretations but also by understanding their interpretations of school related matters (Creswell, 2007).

9.5 Implications and recommendations

The first finding in this research states that poor education in public schools, economic growth, national educational policies and high profit returns are the main factors of the rapid growth of international bilingual schools in Kuwait. In other words, as explained by the participants, because of the low level of quality education in government schools after the war (continuing until now), many parents, especially those who are financially able, sought alternatives to government schools. At that time (early 1990s), there were a limited number of international schools and Kuwaiti local students were not allowed to enrol in them until parents put pressure on the MOE to change its policy. As a result, the MOE introduced new policies and regulations to allow Kuwaiti children to attend international schools and facilitated the establishment of new schools by renting vacant government school premises. Due to the increased demand from Kuwaiti parents, especially for bilingual international schools, and high profit returns from them, the number of these schools started to expand. From this finding, one important point should be taken into consideration by the MOE, that is, improvements in the quality of education in international schools in Kuwait should be aligned with controlling the amount of profit made by these schools. Many parents interviewed in this study argued that if government schools offered good quality education, they would not enrol their children in bilingual international schools. This would involve proper planning by the MOE to increase parents’ confidence in government schools. However, the control of increasing profits made by international schools affected the quality of these schools, as shown in Chapter 8, therefore, the MOE
should introduce and enforce appropriate regulations and policies to monitor and guide these schools so that parents are charged fees according to the standards being offered.

The MOE has to implement legislation to ensure the employment of qualified and experienced teachers to work in these schools. In this study, CIBS and IBS were able to employ teachers who were not qualified or trained to teach in such schools.

The second finding of this study concerns three reasons why parents choose bilingual international schools in Kuwait: (i) bilingual education; (ii) English proficiency; and (ii) attending Western universities. However, two of the schools researched in this study, CIBS and IBS, did not meet the expectations of those parents. Students graduated from CIBS and IBS with low levels of English language skills, therefore, they were unable to apply for Western university studies without completing a foundation year of learning. This issue raises many questions and important points with regard to the quality of education in these accredited international schools and their commitment to their missions. First, the parents’ committee in these two schools has no power and a limited role to play in improving education and suggesting solutions to inefficient school practices. Therefore, the government through the MOE should have appropriate policies to enable parents in these schools to become more involved and have a more powerful role through the parents committee in international schools in approving school practices.

Second, the MOE does not have proper accountability policies to ensure these schools satisfy the expectations of parents. The MOE should have an effective assessment system for international school students so their progress can be measured and decisions can be taken against schools that achieve unexpected results. Additionally, the MOE can make it compulsory for all international schools to organise international standardised assessment testing for their students, such as MAP and SAT, and provide the results as a measurement of progress and academic performance. Third, the international accreditation agency, CIS, for these schools, must have better standards to allow parents the right to become more involved in these schools so that their voices are heard and acted upon by the management.
International accreditation agencies should evaluate parental involvement in these schools and permit their active role in running the school.

The third finding of this study is that international accreditation creates a positive effect on international schools in Kuwait but its recommendations are not enforced. The international accreditation evaluation process and its standards are of great value to the improvement of international schools in Kuwait, as explained in Chapters 8, but at the same time, there was no implementation of important CIS recommendations by CIBS and IBS in regard to quality assurance, such as introducing PD programs for staff members and standardised assessment tests for students. CIBS and IBS have been accredited for the many years and still important recommendations suggested by CIS have not yet been implemented. International accreditation agencies, such as CIS in this case, must have more effective procedures in place for accredited international schools to reach the required standards promptly. This can be enforced by CIS by terminating member school’s accreditation if it does not follow procedures to achieve the required recommendation within a set period of time.

The fourth finding in this study is that the MOE has limited regulations and policies to ensure the quality of education in international schools in Kuwait. As shown Chapters 8, the MOE does not have proper policies in relation to monitoring the academic performance of international schools in Kuwait. No evaluation system has been set by the MOE to evaluate these schools and their education outcomes. However, the MOE is satisfied with the evaluation process performed by international accreditation agencies, such as the CIS in this case, but as shown in Chapters 8, it was not sufficient to guarantee the quality assurance of education in these schools. The MOE should introduce a system of external evaluation of international schools in Kuwait to ensure the implementation of certain standards of education relevant to Kuwait and its educational policies.

The fifth finding in this study concerns six major factors that affect the quality of education in international schools in this study: (i) student behaviour; (ii) staff qualifications and experience; (iii) PD programs; (iv) non-profit policy; (v) parental involvement; and (vi)
educational outcome measures. These factors should be taken into consideration when working towards improving the education system in such schools. Schools must have a clear, strict and effective discipline policy that deals with misbehaviour from students or parents, as was implemented in CBS. The school should also employ qualified and experienced staff (teachers, administration and management) in international education if seeking better quality results. CIBS and IBS lack considerably in this area, which resulted in limited education outcome achievements. Another important factor that had a major effect in improving the education quality in CBS was effective PD programs. This factor assures the continuous improvement of staff skills and knowledge and accordingly, is constantly developing the education process. IBS and CIBS underestimated the effect of PD programs and did not invest in these programs for the sake of saving money, which delayed, according to the analysis, the required progress for quality education. The effect of other quality factors (non-profit policy, parent involvement and education outcome measures), were discussed earlier in this section. Schools such IBS and CIBS should invest more in the school and avoid cutting costs from salaries and resources. For the parental involvement quality factor, it was shown in the analysis, as in the case of CBS, the effective role that parents can play in developing the school if they are given the chance to do so. For the education outcome measures quality factor, it is important for international schools in Kuwait to organise standardised international or national assessment tests to evaluate their students to enable a clear indication of their abilities and skills. This factor is only implemented in CBS. CIBS and IBS stated that they do not organise such assessment tests because their students are not ready to sit for them; this indicates their ineffective education process. It is important for parents, the MOE and CIS to insist that these schools commit to such examinations because their value in measuring the education outcome of schools is fundamental.

9.6 Recommendations for further research

In this study, the focus of investigation was on bilingual international schools in Kuwait. These schools were chosen because of their popularity in Kuwait and rapid growth compared to other types of international schools in Kuwait, for example, American and
British international schools. The selection of the three bilingual international schools in this study (CBS, IBS and CIBS) was because they are accredited by an international accreditation agency (CIS) and also due to the popularity of bilingual schools in Kuwait. Each of them has specific characteristics. For example, CIBS is a conservative Islamic bilingual international school, while CBS is favoured as a liberal, progressive bilingual school, and IBS is a bilingual school that has both mainstream and special needs educational programs.

However, further research is necessary to examine American and British international schools in Kuwait. Investigating the situation of American and British international schools would be a valuable and enriching documentation of the quality of education in these schools. Furthermore, a comparison of research studies could be conducted between American, British and bilingual international schools in Kuwait to contrast the quality of education in these schools, and to give broad research outcomes about international schools in Kuwait. For future studies, it is important to choose schools that arrange international standardised assessment tests for their students so that comparisons between assessment results can be presented and analysed. Evaluating the outcome of students in each school would strengthen the findings of such research study because the main focus is on the quality of education. If international standardised assessment tests are measured by an independent body, the outcome of students is undoubtedly one of the main indicators of the quality of education in such schools.

In addition, for the element of international accreditation in this study, research studies could be performed on other international schools around the world to investigate the effectiveness of the international accreditation process and procedures of international schools globally. The international accreditation process has a direct connection to the quality of education in international schools worldwide because it is responsible for evaluating international schools and guiding them to reach high standards of education. Therefore, investigating such areas is of considerable value to this important international sector as it gives a better understanding of the reality of international accreditation and how it could be improved upon to serve its mission.
References


ISC Research. (2019). ISC Research supplies the most comprehensive, current and objective data and intelligence on the world’s international schools. Retrieved from https://www.iscresearch.com/about-us/who-we-are


Appendices

Appendix A: UWS Ethics Approval

Locked Bag 1797
Penrith NSW 2751 Australia
Office of Research Services
ORS Reference: H10707

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

8 July 2014

Associate Professor Carol Reid
School of Education

Dear Carol,

I wish to formally advise you that the Human Research Ethics Committee has approved your research proposal H10707 “Quality International Schools in Kuwait? History, Ideology, and practice”, until 10 August 2015 with the provision of a progress report annually if over 12 months and a final report on completion.

Conditions of Approval

1. A progress report will be due annually on the anniversary of your approval date.

2. A final report will be due at the expiration of your approval period as detailed in the approval letter.

3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee prior to the project continuing. Amendments must be requested using the HREC Amendment Request Form: http://www.uws.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/491130/HREC_Amendment_Request_Form.pdf

4. Any serious or unexpected adverse events on participants must be reported to the Human Ethics Committee as a matter of priority.

5. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the Committee as a matter of priority

6. Consent forms are to be retained within the archives of the School or Research Institute and made available to the Committee upon request

Please quote the registration number and title as indicated above in the subject line on all future correspondence related to this project. All correspondence should be sent to the email address humanethics@uws.edu.au.

This protocol covers the following researchers:
Carol Reid, Mohamed Moustakim, Moh'D Ibrahim

Yours sincerely

Professor Elizabeth Doane
Presiding Member
Human Researcher Ethics Committee
Appendix B: Permission letters from MOE to conduct this study

Name of the schools researched in this study are covered to protect their identity.

الصادة للخزينة /

품ة طبيبة وبعد...
السيد المحترم/ أ. محمد النبضي
مدير العام للتعليم الخاص

الموضوع: تسهيل مهمة

يقوم الطالب/ محمد سكالس عبد النبضي في جامعة د. يسن سنغ
بإعداد بحوث بعنوان "دور وجودة المدارس الدولية في التطور". التاريـخ:
الأداء.

Firestore تسرع بheimer المذكور أعلاه من خلال إجراء مداخلات على طلاب
مدرسين، نظرة إدارية، وأولياء أمور المدارس الدولية في المدارس التابعة: للتعليم، التعليمية خلال الفصل الدراسي الحالي 2012/10.

مع خالص التحية والتقدير

مدير إدارة البحوث التربوية بالإفتاء

4842404 - 4838321 - Fax : 4837909 - 4842404
P.O.Box : 16222 - QADSIAH - 35853 - KUWAIT - Tel. : 4842404 - 4838321
Appendix C:  Letter to the Ministry Of Education (MOE)

Student researcher: Moh'd Ibrahim
School of Education, Bankstown Campus
Tel. +61490331185
Email: 13395559@student.uws.edu.au

Permission Letter (from the Ministry of Education) for Conducting a Research Study

To the manager of international schools department,

Subject: participating in a research study about international schools in Kuwait

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Moh’d Ibrahim and I am a PhD student at the University of Western Sydney, Australia. I am conducting a research study about the quality of international schools in Kuwait. As a part of my study, I would like to interview Ministry of Education officials and I am writing to you to seek your approval. The participation will be voluntarily for all participants and any information provided by the participants will be treated as strictly confidential and will not be identified in the reporting of the research findings. The participants are free not to answer any question they wish not to and they can withdraw from the interview at any time they wish.

The data provided by the participants will be stored in a locked and safe place accessed only by the researcher. The data will be stored for a minimum of 5 years in accordance with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, and will be used as part of my research higher degree thesis at the University of Western Sydney, and may be reported in conference papers and academic publications. If you would like to receive a summary of the results of the research, that will be arranged. Please find attached copies of the Participant Information Statement, the Consent Form, and my proposed interview questions for your kind consideration.

Please if you wish to contact me for more questions or explanation, feel free to do so via my email: 13395559@student.uws.edu.au, or telephone: +96550652245. Alternatively, if you wish to contact my supervisors for further information about the research, you will find my supervisors contact details located on the Information Statement enclosed.

Kind regards,

Moh'd Ibrahim
الباحث: محمد إبراهيم
جامعة وسترن سدني
كلية التربية، فرع بانكستان
هاتف رقم: 00614903311850
البريد الإلكتروني: 13395559@student.uws.edu.au

الموضوع: طلب تسهيل مهمة القيام بعمل دراسة دكتوراة حول المدارس الدولية في الكويت

المدير العام للتعليم الخاص عبده الله البصري,

تحية طيبة وبعد، اسمى محمد إبراهيم وأنا طالب دكتوراة في جامعة وسترن سدني في أستراليا وأنا يصادف إجراء دراسة بحثية تخص دراسة المدارس الدولية في الكويت. في هذا البحث سوف أقوم بإجراء مقابلات مع الطلاب والأولياء والآباء والأمهات، وكمالين ومديري المدارس وأعضاء مجلس الإدارة، وتنظيم التعليم الخاص، إضافة إلى إجراء تحليل لدور المناهج التعليمية. وبإذن الله فإنني أكتب إليكم طالبا دعماً وموافقةً، للقيام بعمل هذا البحث.

أعلم أن المشاركة في هذا البحث ستكون مفيدة للمؤسسات، والمعلومات المقدمة من قبلهم سهيلاً لسماحتكم.

مع خالص التقدير والاحترام.
محمد إبراهيم

سيتم تزويد البيانات المقدمة من قبل المشاركين في مكان آمن من قبل الباحث لمدة تغطي 5 سنوات. وفقاً للقانون الأسترالي في إجراء البحوث العلمية. وسيعتمد ذلك على الامن الشخصي في جامعتنا وسترن سدني، مع إمكانية عرض تلك البيانات أو جزء منها في حدود المشاركة في المؤتمرات أو النشاط في المجلات الأكاديمية والنشر، إذا كان هناك رغبة من قبلهم بالإطلاع على ملخص النتائج. لن يكون هناك تسجيل للمؤسسات أو الاستفسارات حول البحث أو المشاركة فيه، الرجاء الاتصال بـ 13395559 @ student.uws.edu.au.

ن لكم جزيل الشكر وفائق استنتمائي على مساعدتك ودعمك لهذا البحث، حيث إن هذه الدراسة البحثية سوف تساهم في تطوير التعليم ووضع سياسات من شأنها ضمان الجودة في المدارس الدولية في الكويت.

الباحث: محمد إبراهيم
Appendix D: Letter to bilingual international schools in Kuwait

Student researcher: Moh’d Ibrahim
School of Education, Bankstown Campus
Tel. +61490331185
Email: 13395559@student.uws.edu.au

Permission Letter (from the administration of the international school) for Conducting a Research Study

To the administration of.....
Subject: participating in a research study about international schools in Kuwait

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Moh’d Ibrahim and I am a PhD student at the University of Western Sydney, Australia. I am conducting a research study about role that international schools play in Kuwait of international schools in Kuwait. My research interest relates to teaching and learning in International Schools in Kuwait. I would like to conduct a series of interviews and a focus group with students, teachers, parents, board members and school principals. The research will also involve some curriculum analysis. I am seeking your approval to conduct research in your school. The participation will be voluntarily for all participants and any information provided by the participants will be treated as strictly confidential and their identity or the school’s identity will not be identified in the reporting of the research findings. The participants are free not to answer any questions they wish not to and can withdraw from the interview at any time they wish.

The data provided by the participants will be stored in a locked and safe place accessed only by the researcher. The data will be stored for a minimum of 5 years in accordance with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research. It will be used as part of my research higher degree thesis at the University of Western Sydney, and may be reported in conference papers and academic publications. If you would like to receive a summary of the results of the research, that will be arranged. Please find attached copies of the Participant Information Statement, the Consent Form, and my proposed interview questions for your kind consideration.

Please if you wish to contact me for more questions or explanation, feel free to do so via my email: 13395559@student.uws.edu.au, or telephone: +96550652245. Alternatively, if you wish to contact my supervisors for further information about the research, you will find my supervisors contact details located on the Information Statement enclosed.

Kind regards,

Moh’d Ibrahim
Appendix E: Letter to the Council of International Schools (CIS)

Student researcher: Moh'd Ibrahim
School of Education, Bankstown Campus
Tel. +61490331185
Email: 13395559@student.uws.edu.au

Permission Letter (from the Council of International Schools) for Conducting a Research Study

To the Executive director of CIS

Subject: participating in a research study about international schools in Kuwait

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Moh'd Ibrahim and I am a PhD student at the University of Western Sydney, Australia. I am conducting a research study about the quality of international schools in Kuwait. As a part of my study to interview CIS accrediting team members I am writing to you to ask your permission to allow me to conduct interviews with members of your accrediting team. If you are in agreement with this research I would ask your permission for me to invite some members of your accrediting team to accept voluntarily and choose to participate in my research study. The participation will be voluntarily for all participants and any information provided by the participants will be treated as strictly confidential and will not be identified in the reporting of the research findings. The participants are free not to answer any question they wish to and also they can withdraw from the interview at any time they wish.

The data provided by the participants will be stored in a locked and safe place accessed only by the researcher. The data will be stored for a minimum of 5 years in accordance with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, and will be used as part of my research higher degree thesis at the University of Western Sydney, and may be reported in conference papers and academic publications. If you would like to receive a summary of the results of the research, that will be arranged. Please find attached copies of the Participant Information Statement, the Consent Form, and my proposed interview questions for your kind consideration.

Please if you wish to contact me for more questions or explanation, feel free to do so via my email: 13395559@student.uws.edu.au, or telephone: +9650652245. Alternatively, if you wish to contact my supervisors for further information about the research, you will find my supervisors contact details located on the Information Statement enclosed.

Kind regards,

Moh'd Ibrahim
Appendix F: Invitation letter for participants (English and Arabic)

Student researcher: Moh’d Ibrahim  
University of Western Sydney  
School of Education, Bankstown Campus  
Tel. +61490331185  
Email: 133955559@student.uws.edu.au

An invitation to participate in a research study

Dear Sir/Madam,

Subject: participation in a research study about international schools in Kuwait

My name is Mohammed Ibrahim and I am a PhD student at the University of Western Sydney, Australia. I’m going to conduct a research study on the quality of international schools in Kuwait. In this study, I will be interviewing students, parents, teachers, school administrators and board members, ministry of education officials and Council of International Schools officers. Also an analysis of school curriculum would be conducted. Participation will be voluntary for all participants and they have the right to withdraw at any time if they wish. Any information provided by the participants will be treated as strictly confidential and will not be identified in the reporting of the research findings. The participants are free not to answer any question they wish to and also they can withdraw from the interview at any time they wish.

The data provided by the participants will be stored in a locked and safe place accessed only by the researcher. The data will be stored for a minimum of 5 years in accordance with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, and will be used as part of my research higher degree thesis at the University of Western Sydney, and may be reported in conference papers and academic publications. If you would like to participate in this research study, please contact me through my phone number or e-mail address provided below and I will send you copies of the Participant Information Statement, and the Consent Form for you to get more information and sign the consent form. Your cooperation and acceptance in conducting the interviews is very appreciative as this research study will aid in policy development in regard to quality assurance measures in international schools in Kuwait. Please if you wish to contact me for more questions or explanation, feel free to do so via my email: 133955559@student.uws.edu.au, or telephone: +96550652245.

Best regards,

Mohammed Ibrahim
الباحث: محمد إبراهيم
جامعة وسترتن سدني
كلية التربية، فرع باكستان
هاتف رقم: 00614903311850
الإم‌آيل: 13395559@student.uws.edu.au

دعوة للمشاركة في دراسة بحثية

الموضوع: المشاركة في دراسة بحثية حول المدارس الدولية في الكويت،

تحية طيبة وبعد:

اسمي محمد إبراهيم طالب دكتوراه في جامعة وستروت سدني في أستراليا وأنا بصفتي أستاذ بحثي تخصص في المجالات الدولية في الكويت. في هذا البحث سوف أقوم بالإحراز من المدارس الدولية والأساتذة والمعلمين، وهم المشاركين وأعضاء الجيورد، إضافة إلى إجراء تحلي للمؤسسة الدولية. علة ذلك أبداً المشاركون في هذا البحث ستكون تطوعية. إجمالي المشاركون، كما أوجه علامة المشاركون بأن المعلومات المقدمة من قبلهم سيتم التعامل بها بسرية تامة بحيث لن يتم التعرّف على هويتهم أو هويات مدارسهم عند الإعلان عن نتائج البحث. نشير كذلك إلى المشاركون لهم الحرية التامة في عدم الإجابة عن أي سؤال لا يرغبون في الإجابة عنه، وكذلك لهم الخيار بالإنسحاب من المقابلة في أي وقت يرغبون. بعد ذلك سيتم تخزين البيانات المقدمة من قبل المشاركون في مكان آمن من قبل الباحث لمدة لائحة على 5 سنوات. وفقاً للقانون الأسترالي في إجراء البحث العلمي. وسيتم استخدام تلك البيانات لأغراض بحثي في جامعة وستروت سدني، مع إمكانية عرض تلك البيانات أو جزء منها في حال المشارك أو النشر في المجلات الأكاديمية والكتب. إذا كنت بحثي في المشاركة في هذه الدراسة البحثية يرجى الاتصال بي من خلال الهاتف أو عن طريق الإيميل الإلكتروني أدناه، حيث سأرسل لك نسخة من بيان المعلومات للمشاركين وموجز الموافقة على المشاركة والتوقيع عليه. مع جزيل شكركم وفائق التحية، ومشاركتكم في هذه المقابلات، حيث إن هذه الدراسة البحثية سوف تساعد في تطوير التعليم ووضع سياسات من خلالها ضمان الجودة في المدارس الدولية في الكويت.

ومن يرغب في المزيد من الإيضاحات أو الاستفسارات حول البحث أو المشاركة فيه، فلا تتردد في الاتصال بي عن طريق:

الهاتف: 00614903311850
الإم‌آيل: 13395559@student.uws.edu.au
Appendix G: Participant Information Sheet (English and Arabic)

Human Research Ethics Committee
Office of Research Services

Participant Information Sheet (General)

Project Title: Quality International Schools in Kuwait? History, Ideology, and Practice

Who is carrying out the study?

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Moh'd Ibrahim, PhD candidate, centre for educational research University of Western Sydney under the supervision of Assoc. Prof Carol Reid and Dr. Mohamed Moustakim.

What is the study about?

The purpose is to investigate the global dynamics and educational policy dimensions shaping international schools in Kuwait.

What does the study involve?

A qualitative research method is used to collect data by interviewing participants, through semi-structured interviews except for the students where focus group method will be used, at your school or quiet public place of your choice, and also curriculum analysis of English subject of grade 12 will be conducted.

How much time will the study take?

The semi-structured interviews will have duration of 30-45 minutes, and the focus group will take about one hour.

Will the study benefit me?

It will provide you with an opportunity to reflect on your views and experience of the quality of education in the international schools in Kuwait and this will aid in policy development in regard to quality assurance measures in international schools in Kuwait.

Will the study involve any discomfort for me?

All respect will be shown to your opinions and if you are uncomfortable you may stop the interview.

How is this study being paid for?

The study is being sponsored by the School of Education at the University of Western Sydney in Australia, which has provided funding for a PhD scholarship.
Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated?

All aspects of the study, including results, will be confidential and only the researcher will have access to information on participants. The results will be disseminated through the completion of my PhD thesis, seminars, conference presentation and journal article. Individual participants will not be identifiable in the results or findings. A general summary of the findings and results could be sent to the administration of each school if needed.

Can I withdraw from the study?

Participation is entirely voluntary; you are not obliged to be involved and - if you do participate - you can withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without any consequences.

Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes, you can tell other people about the study by providing them with the chief investigator's contact details. They can contact the chief investigator to discuss their participation in the research project and obtain an information sheet.

What if I require further information?

If you require further information, you can contact Moh'd Ibrahim on the mobile number: +9655065224 or +61490331185 or via my e-mail 13395559@student.uws.edu.au. If you have more questions or need further explanation at any stage, please feel free to contact me or my supervisors Associate Professor Carol Reid on telephone number: +612 97726524 or e-mail C.Reid@uws.edu.au, or Dr. Mohamed Moustakim on telephone number: +612 977206402 or e-mail M.Moustakim@uws.edu.au.

What if I have a complaint?

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is [H10707]

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel +61 2 4736 0229 Fax +61 2 4736 0013 or email humanethics@uws.edu.au.

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.
لجنة أخلاقيات البحوث البشرية
مكتب خدمات البحوث

معلومات عامة للمشاركين في البحوث

هذه المعلومات تم صياغتها بإسلوب ولغة تناسب جميع فئات المشاركين من الكبار والأطفال والشباب البالغين.

عنوان المشروع: جودة المدارس العالمية في الكويت? تأثيرها، مبادراتها، أدلتها

من هو القائم على إجراء الدراسة؟

أدت مدعى المشاركة في دراسة يقوم بإجرائها الباحث طالب الدكتوراه محمد إبراهيم من مركز البحوث
التعليمية في جامعة غرب سيني تحت إشراف الدكتورة كارول ريد والدكتور محمد المستقدم.

ما هي دراسة البحث؟

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو تحليل وتحليل دور تأثير المدارس الدولية في الكويت، وأبعاد السياسة
التعليمية المحلية والعالمية في تشكيل وBSITE هذه المدارس.

إذا من الضروري هذه الدراسة؟

سيتم استخدام طريقة الدراسة النوعي لجمع البيانات من خلال مقابلة المشاركين لمدة من 45 دقيقة، واستنادا
للطلاب، حيث سيتم استخدام أسئلة المقابلات الجماعية لمدة ساعة واحدة في مدرستك أو أي مكان، إذا من
اختيارك، و أيضا، سيتم تحليل ملاحظات اللغة الإنجليزية للفن الثاني عشر.

كم من الوقت ستستغرق المقابلات؟

سوف تكون مدة المقابلة الفردية 45 دقيقة، بالنسبة لمقابلات المجموعات أو الحقات سوف تكون مدتها حوالي
ساعة واحدة.

هل ستكون الدراسة (مقابلة) مفيدة لـ؟

سوف تتيح لك المقابلة فرصة لإعطاء وجهات نظركم وماذا تتحرك من خلال خبراتكم و
تجاربكم في المدارس الدولية في الكويت، حول نمط التعليم في هذه المدارس، وسوف يساعد هذا على تطوير
السياسات المتعلقة بضمان الراحة في المدارس الدولة في الكويت.

هل سيستنتج عن الدراسة أي آثار سلبية قد تحقق البيوكم شراكم في هذه الدراسة؟

طبعا، لا، جميع أركان ستكون محل تقدير واحترام، وإذا تشعر بماء الأرباح في اكتمال المقابلة سيتم إيقافها.

كيف يتم تمويل هذه الدراسة ماديا؟

يتم تمويل هذه الدراسة عن طريق منحة دراسية من قبل كلية التربية والتعليم في جامعة ويسترن سيدني في
أستراليا.
هل سيكون هناك أي شخص آخر على علم بالنتائج؟ وكيف سيتم نشر هذه النتائج؟

بالنسبة لجميع جوانب الدراسة، بما في ذلك النتائج، سوف تكون سريّة وسكون بمقدار البحث فقط الحصول على معلومات عن المشاركين. وبالنسبة للنتائج، سيتم نشرها من خلال رسالة الدكتوراه الخاصة بالبحث الرئيسي، أو من خلال المؤتمرات والمجلات. المعلومات الشخصية للإجراء ستكون سريّة وأن يظل عليها أحد باستثناء الباحث الرئيسي. بالنسبة للنتائج العامة للبحث فيمكن إرسال ملخص عام للنتائج لإدارة كل مدرسة إذا لزم الأمر.

هل بالإمكان الانسحاب من الدراسة (المقابلة)

المشاركة طوعية، فأنه غير ملزم أن تشارك عند الموافقة على المشاركة في الدراسة وآرائها بعد ذلك إن تنسحب فيمكن ذلك في أي وقت شنت دون إلغاء أي سبب و دون أي عواقب.

هل بالإمكان إخطار الآخرين عن الدراسة؟

نعم، يمكنك أن تخبر الآخرين عن الدراسة و يمكنك تزويدهم بإبرام الهواتف والبريد الإلكتروني الخاصة بالباحث الرئيسي للاتصال به ومناقشة مشاركتهم في مشروع البحث والحصول على ورقة المعلومات.

كيف بالإمكان الحصول على مزيد من المعلومات؟

إذا كنت تحتاج إلى مزيد من المعلومات، يمكنك الاتصال بالباحث محمد إيراهيم عن طريق الوسائط التالية:

- جوال رقم: 85 +61490331188 أو 096655065224
- بريد الالكتروني: 133955559@student.uws.edu.au

وإذا كان لديك أي استفسارات أو شكوك تحتاج إلى إيضاح أو استفسارات أخرى حول أي مرحلة تتعلق بالبحث فما عليك إلا الاتصال بفريق الإشراف على البحث و هما:

- الدكتور كارول ريد، هاتف رقم 0061297726524
- C.Reid@uws.edu.au
- محمد مستيهم، هاتف رقم 00612977206400
- M.Moustakim@uws.edu.au

ماذا لو كان لدي شكوى؟

لقد تم التوافق على هذه الدراسة من قبل لجنة أخلاقيات البحوث البشرية في جامعة ويسترن سيدني. رقم الموافقة هو [H10707]. إذا كان لديك أي شكوك أو تحفظات على أخلاقيات سير هذا البحث، يمكنك الاتصال على لجنة الأخلاقيات من خلال مكتب خدمات البحوث على هاتف 0961247360229 أو فاكس humanethics@uws.edu.au أو البريد الإلكتروني 0061247360013

سيتم التعامل مع القضايا المثيرة بكامل السرية والمهنية وسيتم التحقق فيها بالكامل، وسيتم إبلاغ بنتائج التحقق.

إذا كنت توافق على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة، قد يطلب منك التوقيع على نموذج الموافقة للمشاركة.
Appendix H: Participant Consent Form (English and Arabic)

Human Research Ethics Committee
Office of Research Services

Participant Consent Form

This is a project specific consent form. It restricts the use of the data collected to the named project by the named investigators.

Project Title: Quality International Schools in Kuwait? History, Ideology, and Practice

I, ............................................, consent to participate in the research project Quality International Schools in Kuwait? History, Ideology, and Practice. I acknowledge that: I have read the participant information sheet [or where appropriate, ‘have had read to me’] and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.

The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

I consent to the information collected from the participants includes their age, gender, educational background, qualifications, position (job), and the years of employment. I consent to a one hour audio taping of an interview with the researcher and I am willing to participate in this research.

I understand that my involvement is confidential and that the information gained during the study may be published but no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher/s now or in the future.

Signed:

Name:

Date:

Return Address:

This study has approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The approved number is:

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel +61247360229 or email humanestics@uws.edu.au. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
نموذج موافقة المشارك

نموذج الموافقة الإذن خاص بمشروع معين. حيث أنه يقيد استخدام البيانات التي تم جمعها لمشروع محدد الإسم ومن قبل باحثين معروفين بالإسم.

عنوان المشروع: جودة المدارس العالمية في الكويت، تاريخها، مبادئها، أداتها

أنا، ..............................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................، أوافق على المشاركة في المشروع البحثي المسمى جودة المدارس العالمية في الكويت.

وأقر بذلك:

أوافق على وقوع المعلومات العامة للمشاركين في البحث [أو عند الاقتضاء، ] قد تُرمي إلى ] ولقد أعطيت الفرصة لمناقشة هذه المعلومات وكذلك مشاركتي في هذا المشروع مع الباحث.

أوافق على الإجراءات اللازمة للمشروع ورغم الوقت الذي يطلبه لعمل المقابلة، ولقد تم الإجابة على جميع الأسئلة التي تم طرحها عن المشروع من قبل إجابة شفافة.

أوافق على المعلومات التي تم جمعها عن المشاركين والتي تتضمن العمر والجنس والدرجة العلمية والمؤهلات والوظيفة، والخبرة العملية.

أوافق على تسجيل المقطع الصوتي للمقابلة مع الباحث لعدة🔚 قد تصل إلى ساعة واحدة ويتطلب أنا على استعداد للمشاركة في هذا البحث، مع العلم أنني أستطيع الانسحاب منه في أي وقت أشاء دون أن يؤثر ذلك على علاقةي مع الباحث أو الباحثين سواء الآن أو في المستقبل. أنا أفهم أن مشاركتي في هذا البحث سرية وأفهم كلاً كلاً أنه عند عرض أو نشر هذا البحث فإنه لم يتم استخدام أي من معلوماتي الشخصية بأي حال من الأحوال ولن يتم كشفه هويتي.

التوفيق:

الاسم:

التاريخ:

عنوان استقبال المشارك:

هذه الدراسة قد تم الموافقة عليها من قبل لجنة أخلاقيات البحوث البشرية في جامعة وسترن سيدني. رقم الموافقة هو: [H10700]

إذا كان لديك أي شكوك أو تحفظات على أخلاقيات هذا البحث، فبإمكانك الاتصال بلجنة الأخلاقبون من خلال مكتب خدمات البحوث على هاتف: 297 412473602222222 أو البريد الإلكتروني: humanestics@uws.edu.au. وسيتم التعامل مع أي قضايا مثيرة بكمية الحبيبة والهندس والتحقيق فيها بالكامل، وعند الوصول لننتظر التحقق سنتلقي إبلاغك بها.
Appendix I: Parent/Caregiver Consent Form (English and Arabic)

Human Research Ethics Committee
Office of Research Services

Participant Consent for Parents/Caregivers

This is a project specific consent form. It restricts the use of the data collected to the named project by the named investigators. Where projects involve young people capable of consenting, a separate consent form should be developed. A parental consent form is still required.

Project Title: Quality International Schools in Kuwait? History, Ideology, and Practice

I………………………………………… give consent for my child …………………………………………to participate in the research project Quality International Schools in Kuwait? History, Ideology, and Practice.
I acknowledge that:
I have read the participant information sheet [or where appropriate, ‘have had read to me’] and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my child’s involvement in the project with the researcher/s.
The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.
I have discussed participation in the project with my child and my child agrees to their participation in the project.
I understand that my child’s involvement is confidential and that the information gained during the study may be published but no information about my child will be used in any way that reveals my child’s identity.
I understand that my child’s participation in this project is voluntary. I can withdraw my child from the study at any time, without affecting their academic standing or relationship with the school and they are free to withdraw their participation at any time.
I consent to the participation in one hour audio taped focus group. Please cross out any activity that you do not wish your child to participate in.

Signed (Parent/caregiver):
Name:
Date:

Signed (child):
Name:
Date:

Where projects involve young people capable of consenting, a separate form should be developed. A parental consent form is still required.

Return Address:

This study has approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The approval number is: [H10707]. If you have any complains or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel +61247360229 or email humanestics@uws.edu.au. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
نموذج موافقة ولي أمر المشارك

نموذج الموافقة اداة خاصة بمشروع معين حيث أنه يقيد استخدام البيانات التي تم جمعها لمشروع معين وفقًا لمدة الزمن ومن قبل مسؤولين موفرين بالإصدار. عندما يتطلب مشروع البحث ببساطة الحساب عن اعتماد الموافقة في ذلك على نموذج منفصل مع الإيقاف في ضرورة توقيع ولي الامر على نموذج موافقة ولي الامر.

عنوان المشروع: "些什么 du مدارس العالمية في الكويت? تاريخها، مبادراتها، أداها.

أقرأ باللغة العربية: 

لا تقرى ورقة المعلومات العامة للمشاركين في المشروع أو بعد الاقتراح، قد تم قرانتها في ولي الأمين التي تم اعتماد هوية ولي الأمين في هذا المشروع مع الاحترام.

لقد تم إجراءات الموافقة اللازمة للاطراف من العناصر، للإجابة على جميع الأسئلة التي يتم طرحها عن المشروع من قبل إجابة شفافة.

لقد واجب الشارك في المشروع مع ابيه/ابنها وتمت الموافقة على المشاركة في هذا المشروع.

أقرأ باللغة العربية: 

لا أن تقري ورقة المعلومات العامة للمشاركين في المشروع أو بعد الاقتراح، قد تم قرانتها في ولي الأمين الذي تم استخدام أي من المعلومات الشخصية بأي حال من الأحوال، ولن يتم تنفيذ هوية الشارك في هذا المشروع.

لقد اتهم أن الشارك في ابيه/ابنها في هذا المشروع هو طرف وسوف يسمح ابيه/ابنها من الدراسة في أي وقت دون أن يطرأ ذلك مكانتهم الأكاديمية أو العلاقة مع المدرسة وانهم أيها المشارك في أي وقت.

أقرأ باللغة العربية: 

لا أن تقري ورقة المعلومات العامة للمشاركين في المشروع أو بعد الاقتراح، قد تم قرانتها في ولي الأمين الذي تم استخدام أي من المعلومات الشخصية بأي حال من الأحوال، ولن يتم تنفيذ هوية الشارك في هذا المشروع.

التوقيع (ولي الأمر) :

الاسم :
التاريخ :

واعرف باللغة العربية: 

عندما يتطلب مشروع البحث ببساطة الحساب عن اعتماد الموافقة في ذلك على نموذج منفصل مع الإيقاف في ضرورة توقيع ولي الامر على نموذج موافقة ولي الامر.

عندوان استقبال المشارك:

هذه الدالة قد تم الموافقة عليها من قبل لجنة أخلاقيات البحوث البشرية في جامعة وسترتن سيدني. رقم الموافقة هو: [H10707]

إذا كنت هناك أي أسئلة أو تحديات على أخلاقيات هذا البحث فإن يمكنك التواصل مع إلكتروني: humanestics@uws.edu.au o البريد الإلكتروني: 41247360229 أو الهاتف: 298. 41247360229

يتم التعامل مع أي قضايا مثيرة بكمال الحضور والخصوصية فيها بالكامل.، وعند الوصول لنتائج التحقيق سيتم إبلاغك بها.
Appendix J: Interview Questions

A) Interview questions for interviewing the students:

1. Can you introduce yourself and talk about your experience in this school?
2. How is this school different to other schools?
3. How assessment is conducted in this school? Do you think there is a need for international standardized assessment you have to take? Why?
4. What do you think about learning in a foreign language (English)?
5. What style of learning do you prefer?
6. What are your plans after you finish your high school?
7. Do you have any suggestions to improve learning in this school?

B) Interview questions for interviewing the parents:

1. How did you hear about this school and why did choose it for your son(s)/daughter(s)? Do you have other children not in this school? Why?
2. Can you tell me about your son’s/daughter’s experience in this school? Is education in such schools makes them different to other students who go to public schools? How?
3. What is the best thing do you like about this school? E.g. curriculum, teachers, principals, or administration.
4. In what ways will an international education benefit your child’s future?
5. Are you satisfied with this school? Why?

C) Interview questions for interviewing the teachers:

1. Can you talk about yourself, qualifications, and experience?
   - What kinds of orientation and induction programs were offered to you at the beginning of your work in this school?
2. What are the students like in this school? What are their needs?
3. What are the issues, if there, that affect your teaching negatively? Are discipline issues taking care of by the administration?
4. What do you think about the curriculum you are teaching? How are the exams designed?
5. What do you think about the professional development in this school?
6. How does accreditation affect learning in this school?
7. Can you explain the parents’ attitude towards education this school?

D) Interview questions for interviewing the curriculum coordinators:
1. Can you introduce yourself and tell me about your qualifications and a brief description of your job?
2. How is the curriculum in your school organized/designated? Does MOE interfere in the content or design of the curriculum? How?
3. What are the guidelines of CIS related to designing the curriculum? Do you think these guidelines are effective and suitable for this context and culture?
4. How are teachers involved in designing the curriculum?
5. How do you monitor implementing the curriculum?
6. Do you receive any suggestions or complaints from the parents regarding the curriculum? Are parents satisfied with this curriculum?
7. How is assessment and testing incorporated in the curriculum?

E) Interview questions for interviewing the accreditation school coordinators:
1. Can you introduce yourself and tell me about your qualifications and your position in this school? Can you give me a brief description of the process of accreditation and its purpose?
2. What are the areas that CIS focus on during the accreditation process?
3. What are the conditions set by CIS to approve the school facilities?
4. What are the guidelines regarding the curriculum and education policy set by CIS to be implemented in this school?
5. What issues regarding teachers and principals are focused on during accreditation process? Can you explain the nature of professional development the CIS requires from your school to offer its teachers and staff?
6. How does CIS approach issues regarding assessment and academic performance in accredited schools? How does CIS monitor the academic performance in accredited schools?

F) **Interview questions for interviewing the professional development coordinators:**

1. Can you introduce yourself and tell me about your qualifications and experience?
2. Please describe your role at this school?
3. Can you describe professional development (PD) programs you have developed for the school? Are your PD programs offered in both English and Arabic?
4. Is there a relationship between the curriculum and the kind of PD you offer at the school?
5. Are there certain guidelines from the CIS regarding PD?
6. Are there certain guidelines from the ministry of education regarding PD?
7. Are teachers involved in deciding what kind of PD they receive? Do you find that most new international teachers coming to your school are well equipped to teach in this context? If not, what kind of PD do you think they need?
8. Do you invite professionals to run PD programs?
9. Is there a specific budget for PD in your school? How much?

G) **Interview questions for interviewing the academic counselors:**

1. Can you introduce yourself and talk about your qualifications and experience.
2. What kinds of orientation and induction programs were offered to you at the beginning of your work in this school?
3. How are students in this school/context different from other schools/context?
4. What are their needs? What kind of difficulties do they face in this school?
5. What are the common issues that you believe negatively affect their learning?
6. How are discipline issues handled by the administration?
7. As a counselor, do you think the curriculum is suitable for the students in this context?

8. Do you think that the majority of the students in this school have a positive relationship with teachers? Are the teachers offered orientation or mentoring on how to deal with students in this context?

9. What are the students’ attitudes toward assessment in this school? How they are reacting towards other (international) assessments they are asked to sit for by the school?

10. What kind of professional development are you offered in this school?

11. Why do you think parents choose this school to put their children in? What are the future plans of the students after they finish their high school? Are these plans theirs or their parents?

12. How does accreditation affect your role in this school? And how does it affect learning in such a school?

H) Interview questions for interviewing the principals:

1. Can you talk about your self, qualifications and experience?

2. How big is your department (high school section)? E. g. teaching staff, students

3. Why do you think parents choose this school to put their children in?

4. Can you explain to me about the education policy you adopted in your department?

5. What standards are followed in designing the curriculum of this school?

6. What kind of criteria do you follow in employing your teachers?

7. What kind of professional development do you organize for your teachers? How do you evaluate them?

8. How do you assess your students? Do you organize for your students to sit for international exams and assessments?

9. Can you talk to me about accreditation and its importance to your school?
   – How does CIS evaluate your school?
I) Interview questions for interviewing the superintendents (directors):

1. Can you introduce yourself, and talk about your qualifications and experience?

2. How big are the international schools that you worked at? E.g. teaching staff, students

3. Why do you think parents choose international schools to put their children in?

4. Can you explain the education policies that were adopted in this school?

5. What are the criteria that were followed in designing the curricula in this school?

6. What kind of criteria did you follow in employing teachers for these schools?

7. What kind of professional development did you organize for your teachers? How do you evaluate them?

8. How assessments were conducted in this school? Were international exams and assessments organized for the students?

9. Can you talk about accreditation and its importance to this school? How does CIS evaluate this school?

J) Interview questions for interviewing the board members:

1. What is your position/role in the board of the school?

2. How long have you been a board member?

3. Tell me about the school history and the reasons that encouraged you to invest in and establish this school?

4. What ministries are involved in regulating your school’s affairs? How?

5. What are the regulations and conditions set by the Ministry Of Education (MOE) to license and run your school?

6. How is your school different to other schools? Why do you think parents choose to put their children in this school?

7. How does the board plan to improve the school? Who is responsible for putting plans forward for developing the school?
8. Do you employ educational consultants for assisting the board in taking decisions related to educational issues?

9. How do you help maintain a good reputation for your school? How does accreditation affect the school’s reputation? Is it costly to get the school accredited?

10. How do you employ superintendents and principals? What qualifications, experiences and other qualities (native speakers and Western countries origin) should they have?

11. What sort of incentives do you offer to attract better-qualified superintendents and principals? How do you evaluate the performance of your superintendent and principals?

12. How do you evaluate the performance of your school as organisation?

13. What are the future goals of the board toward the school?

14. Do shareholders aim more for quick profits or for long-term achievements?

K) Interview questions for interviewing the Ministry Of Education (MOE) officials:

1. Can you tell me about your job and responsibilities?

2. Why do you think there has been a rapid increase in the number of international schools in Kuwait since 1990?

3. What areas related to international schools does ministry regulate?

4. What are the conditions set by the ministry of education to approve the curricula of these schools?

5. How do you approve teachers to teach in these schools?

6. How is international accreditation important for international schools in Kuwait?

7. What are the conditions of the school facilities and buildings that should be in place before issuing a license to these schools?

8. What are the strategies that designed by the ministry of education specifically for international schools in Kuwait for delivering suitable educational policy? How does the ministry monitor the implementation of these policies?
9. What are the assessment tools and standards to monitor the academic performance of the students in these schools?

10. How does the MOE deal and react to complaints and incidents regarding the education quality in international schools in Kuwait?

L) Interview questions for interviewing the accreditation official at CIS:

1. What is your position and duties in the Council of International Schools (CIS)? Can you talk about the aims, goals, and process of international accreditation?

2. How do you explain the rapid increase of international schools in the G.C.C region and especially in Kuwait?

3. What are the areas that CIS focus on during the accreditation process?

4. What are the conditions set by CIS to approve the school facilities?

5. What are the guidelines regarding the curriculum and education policy set by CIS to be implemented by accredited schools?

6. What issues regarding teachers and principals are focused on during accreditation process? Are these issues related to qualifications, professional development, and salaries?

7. How does CIS approach issues regarding assessment and academic performance in accredited schools? How does CIS monitor the academic performance in accredited schools?