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Changing the Rules of the Game:
A case study of stakeholder perceptions of the changing tertiary entry requirements in Lebanon.

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Abstract

The tertiary and secondary systems in Lebanon have traditionally been diverse, with differences between government and private systems and between the French-based secondary and a tertiary system largely established by Americans. Despite this complexity, tertiary entrance in Lebanon traditionally relied on the national Lebanese Baccalaureate. With increasing internationalisation and competition between universities, tests such as the international Baccalureate, IELTS and TOEFL and, more recently, the SAT, the academic literacy and writing used in the US, have also become requirements for different universities. The impact of this changing situation on schools, universities, teachers, students and their families has attracted little research attention, despite the implications for equity of access to tertiary education. Despite international evidence of the impact of tertiary entry requirements on secondary schooling and the problems emerging in the nexus between secondary and tertiary education, there is little research into this situation in the Arab world and Lebanon in particular.

This study investigates the impact of the changing tertiary entry requirements on key stakeholders in one secondary school. The case study approach enables the collection of in-depth qualitative interview data to explore the perceptions of English teachers (x3), school principal and executive (x2), curriculum designers (x2), university admission officers (x3) and present and former students (x27). Interview data were transcribed and coded and subjected to content and thematic analysis

The findings indicate a lack of alignment between school curriculum and preparation and tertiary requirements. Respondents questioned the relevance of the Lebanese Baccalaureate and the secondary school curriculum but also the appropriateness of the SAT. Attitudes to where responsibility lay for bridging the secondary/ tertiary gap varied between participants. There was evidence of increasing pressure on students, families and teachers to respond to the changes in tertiary entry. There was also a negativity from students about lack of support in preparation for tertiary entry tests. Interview data also indicated growing acceptance of a divided education system and issues in equity of access to tertiary education for students from mid- and lower-SES families.

Although this case is limited to one private school in the south of Lebanon, it raises issues which may have relevance across the complex Lebanese secondary and tertiary systems. The implications are that the gap emerging between secondary and tertiary education may be filled by ‘shadow education’, private coaching and by tertiary remediation courses. The issue of tertiary entry requirements for study is one of growing concern as the gap between secondary schooling and higher education grows.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the spirit of my parents Fakhreddine Dabaga and Kawsar Ali who valued education and instilled it in their children. More importantly, I dedicate this work to the soul of my soul, my brother Bilal, whose spirit will always be a kindle of hope and strength for further learning.

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Abbreviations

AUB	American University of Beirut
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BAU	Beirut Arab University
BSc	Bachelor of Science
BUC	Beirut University College
CERD	Centre of Education and Research Development
EEE	English Entrance Exam
EFL	English as Foreign Language
ESL	English as Second Language
GS	General Science
GSC	General Secondary Certificate
HCU	Hariri Canadian University
HSC	Higher School Certificate
HU	Humanities
IB	International Baccalaureate
IBT	Internet Based TOEFL
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
LAU	Lebanese American University
LIU	The Lebanese International University
LS	Life Sciences
NEASC	New England Association of Schools and Colleges
MoE	Ministry of Education
MOEHE /MEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
CHS	Castle High School
RQ	Research Question
SAT	Scholastic Aptitude Test
SES	Socio-Economic Status
SJTIHE	Shanghai Jiao Tong list of universities
TEFL	Teaching of English as a Foreign Language
TD	Teaching Diploma
TOEFL	Testing of English as a Foreign Language
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
USJ	Saint Joseph University

Chapter One – Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The GSC (General Secondary Certificate) or the Lebanese Baccalaureate Certificate, a curriculum-based terminating secondary school examination is considered a high-stakes examination for students, schools and parents. This exam mainly functions as a university entrance qualification, albeit in tandem with additional, mostly language proficiency tests for private American-style universities. More recently with a greater number of Lebanese students opting for an American model tertiary education, the GSC has caused much controversy about its credibility and reliability, especially when matched with global educational university admission schemes. Therefore, standard setting is not always straightforward and may involve many pitfalls. The GSC transcript includes individual subject scores plus a total score. There is strong evidence to suggest that little if any use is made of these data by tertiary institutions other than the Lebanese University. The American-style university pays little attention to Baccalaureate results in making admission decisions. The SAT is required of all applicants to AUB and LAU and each prospective student is responsible for registering for and taking the SAT. The paradox in using the SAT in Lebanon is that a test largely based on the language repertoire of native speakers in the United States of America is a context in which English is generally limited to specific domains such as education and international trade. This creates a quandary for secondary students in Lebanon, who may be torn between committing and devoting their time to either the Baccalaureate or the SAT. All the while, the SAT has become an instrument of social reproduction and entrenchment of inequalities in Lebanese society. The problem lies in the impact the changing tertiary entry requirements is having on senior high school students and their teachers when faced with conflicting perceptions about the secondary- tertiary nexus.

1.2 Research Aims

For many students in the private sector, seeking admission into the elite universities in Lebanon can be a daunting and painstaking experience. Over the last decade, a great number of exiting high school students from both the Anglophone and French based educational sectors in Lebanon have sought entry into private American –style universities. This study investigates one private school and three universities whose complex, yet homogeneous systems represent similar conduct. The site of one school and three universities serves the

researcher's goal to describe a typical case that is highly representative of many other schools and private universities in Lebanon. The introduction of the SAT and other changes to tertiary entry have not yet been researched in terms of their impact The secondary/tertiary gap is a worldwide issue and has always been a key problem in Lebanon because of the different origins of the two systems, particularly when the national curriculum does not align with the globalised aspirations of most private universities in Lebanon. The aim of my study is, in a small way, to bridge the gap between private secondary phase schooling and tertiary education in Lebanon and draw the attention of educational policy makers to the impact SAT has on all the stakeholders involved. The project aims to identify stakeholders' perceptions of the nexus between senior secondary school and university entry. It investigates whether the changes are bringing greater flexibility and equity to the education system or whether they are entrenching existing inequalities. This research will hopefully help in the decisions made about the development of the curriculum and syllabus geared to the Lebanese Baccalaureate and its effect on senior secondary students at a time when university entry requirements are changing. The final chapter of the research aims at making recommendations for change and reform in curriculum design and university admission procedures, arguing that both the school and university need to be effective and dynamic in response to both internal and external forces.

The specific research questions of the study are:

What are the implications of the changing tertiary entry requirements in Lebanon for student access, school curriculum, and key stakeholders?

- *What are the differences and similarities in perceptions of tertiary administrators and curriculum developers of the changing entry requirements and the responsibilities in preparing for these?*
- *How do students at American-style universities perceive the challenges of the language-based entry tests and role and responsibilities of schools in preparing for these examinations?*
- *How do secondary students perceive and experience the issues of tertiary entry tests?*
- *In what ways do secondary teachers and the executive respond to and accommodate the changing language requirements of American-style universities?*

1.3 Theoretical Framework

Conceptually, the study is grounded in the work of notions of *habitus*, cultural and linguistic capital of Bourdieu (1979, 1990, 1991).

It builds on Bourdieu's belief that education has a profound impact on class in society and plays an influential role in reproducing societies. In other words, Bourdieu challenged the idea that education systems are meritocratic and viewed them as the reproduction of class and inequality.

1.4 Methodology

The study involves a case study of one private school, along with three universities and the Centre of Educational Research and Development and each of their personnel and representatives in the Lebanese Republic. The school is 'Castle High School' for the purposes of this study. The three universities are: (AUB), (LAU) and (HCU), but now called Hariri University because five years ago the university did not renew its affiliation with the Canadian Bureau of International Education (CBIE) and Capilano College and Memorial University. The data collection covered a period of one academic year (nine months) from the beginning of October 2008 to June 2009. Qualitative data in this study drew on three sources: (1) 21 semi-structured student interviews, (2) three admission officers, (3) two curriculum developers (CERD), and (4) four staff members. These generated nine hours of student audio recordings, three hours of admission officer and curriculum developer audio recordings and two hours of staff audio recordings, totalling 14 hours. In addition there were the research diary, student surveys and document analysis. (More detail on this methodology is given in Chapter 4.)

1.5 Teacher and Researcher

What makes a curriculum effective and what predictors indicate success for school, university and beyond? The answers to this question vary according to the different stakeholders. Albert Einstein once said: "Not everything that counts can be counted and not everything that can be counted counts." Hence, to students and parents it may be the quality of learning and how well they perform on the national exams set by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) that prepares them for university entry. To industry and its associates it may be the skill and competence displayed on internal and external exams. To faculty, on the other hand, it could be simply enriching learners' learning

opportunities through thought-provoking and well-structured lessons. My interest stemmed from my work as a teacher of English for more than fifteen years at Castle High School, a relatively young school striving to establish a reputable image among its counterparts, locally and nationally. I had direct contact with students and staff alike and during the occasional talks, issues of concern emerged about the curriculum and the challenges encountered by secondary students upon preparing for higher education. Despite the intensive preparation students dedicate to the government exams, most universities in Lebanon place a greater emphasis on SAT scores as a criterion for entry.

Being a teacher in the school gave me access and understanding that an outsider would not have had. Being bilingual and bicultural in Arabic and English also gave me the position of both insider and outsider. Separating my role as teacher and being a researcher was, however, a difficult journey.

1.6 Rationale for this Research: Barriers to Higher Education in Lebanon

The origin of this research emerges from remembered quotes from students who would comment about their experience after taking the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) on the Saturday prior to our meeting in class on Monday at school. “Sir, this can’t be English.”, “I’m doing it again next month.”, “In the last section, I just picked answers randomly.”, “Why can’t we get more practice at school?” These comments and the constant test obsessions students had, alarmed and disturbed me.

I grew up in Australia, and remembered how education focused on developing the individual’s skills and enriching the learning opportunity so one is prepared to integrate into society independently at his/her chosen career. It did not matter whether you excelled on a single test and assessment was on-going rather than determined by one standardised test. As a postgraduate student in 1993 when I was pursuing a Diploma of Education at Sydney University, I gained my diploma without taking a single test. I was assessed on how well I presented my assignments and my teaching performance during the practicum and not on how well I retained information for the single purpose of a test. Most of the assessment was task-based. The skills needed to succeed were more about study skills, cognitive reasoning strategies, academic behaviour, discipline and contextual skills.

I have been a teacher of ESL/EFL (English as Second Language/English as Foreign Language) in Australia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and primarily Lebanon for more

than fifteen years and my experience at secondary schooling led to my growing realisation that education was changing both in Australia and in Lebanon with the growing gap between secondary and tertiary education. Increasing numbers of students are finishing high school and competing more for places into tertiary education. I saw many enter university lacking the prerequisite academic skills to be successful in postsecondary education. Moreover, many students entering university reported to me that they had to take multiple developmental courses before integrating into mainstream classes. Although access to higher education has increased substantially over the past forty years and more so in the last two decades in Lebanon, gaining entry into a tertiary institution seemed to be so much more competitive. To me it seemed that education of the whole person was no longer finding its place in the curriculum. I am a native speaker of English and had learned most of my English in Australia. I knew that you could have engaging and challenging English teaching that prepared you for tertiary education but that also gave you a general love of English literature and language.

In 1983, my parents moved back to Lebanon and I was enrolled in a local state school in Saida. My parents knew very little about the education system and frankly could not afford the private schools. They assumed that the state system provided a good education just like it did in Australia. This is when I met the exceptional Samir Abu Teen, the passionate and well read English teacher. He spoke eloquently with an American accent and taught literature with passion. I learnt about Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth, Dickinson and the like and every piece of work became relevant because he made sense of it all. He was my inspiration and the reason I developed an interest in becoming an English teacher. My experience teaching English as a foreign language at all levels (school and university) made me realise also how there were gaps in the curriculum due to the different English syllabi in place in each learning phase or cycle. As an eye witness, I saw how students' motivation altered as they progressed into secondary schooling. Upon reaching the Year 9 Brevet and being exposed to a rigorous and test-drilling program, students became disinterested in the subject matter simply because it focussed on an external national exam unlike the previous years where learners were engaged in a literature-based curriculum that brought joy and challenge to their learning opportunities while developing their critical thinking skills. The whole purpose of learning I thought was to get learners excited and motivated through a student-centred pedagogy approach. Then in grades 11 and 12, the primary focus was on preparing students for the Lebanese Baccalaureate. I felt hampered by the English curriculum in Lebanon that was designed for students with very basic language competencies. Motivation, in turn, stemmed from outside

sources, such as a student needing to pass a test in order to satisfy a language requirement. In practice, students tend to have a variety of reasons to learn a foreign language and different aspects motivated them at different times. I was dismayed at being part of a system where the teaching we were supposed to be doing worked against students being engaged and motivated to learn.

When I went through school and university in Australia I knew that even though I did not come from a rich background, I had access to the benefits of education. In Lebanon I have been teaching in an elite private school and the inequities of the system hit home to me. Many of the students in my school come from families which are struggling – the difficulties for young people from poorer families upset me. For many Lebanese young people, being competent in a foreign language such as English is an added value given that the unemployment rate was highest for those with a tertiary education according to a survey conducted by the World Bank in 2010. The report found that it takes 18 months for fresh graduates to find a job. Parents invest their savings and even sell off their property to provide an education for their children, but with rising costs in higher education and the challenges of landing a job upon graduating this becomes a contested issue. At one end of the continuum, students are struggling to gain entry into their chosen university, while at the other end lie a body of graduates who cannot find a job. Across the board, the prospects for graduates are alarming. Those who seek jobs locally rely on "wasta", the connections one has because Lebanon is known for its hundreds of years of established family and political connections.

These are the reasons that motivated me to study the tertiary entrance system in Lebanon – to understand why the system was becoming more competitive and what effects this was having on students, their families and the education systems themselves.

In this study, the majority of students at Castle High School (CHS) sought admission to private American-style universities and, if financially well-off, tended to have American University of Beirut (AUB) and Lebanese American University (LAU) as their priority. Others may look at Beirut Arab University (BAU) and Hariri Canadian University (HCU) as alternatives and the very few who sought to major in Law sought entry into the Lebanese University, considered the top university for this major. Moreover, in order to gain admission into these American-style universities students are not only required to receive a successful mark on the Lebanese Baccalaureate, but also needed to demonstrate sound knowledge of English on a standardised university entry exam, namely SAT. Barnes, Slate, and Rojas-LeBouef (2010) argued that university entry as defined by scores on standardised tests such

as SAT is a very narrowing and limiting definition. Despite the intensive preparation students and teachers exerted for the Lebanese Baccalaureate, most of the private universities, particularly those of an American model, place greater emphasis on SAT scores as a criterion for entry. While there is a significant and growing literature in the area of using TOEFL (Testing of English as a Foreign Language) as an English entry exam into tertiary study, a notably under-researched area is that how stakeholders (viewed here as mainly the students, teachers and other staff in both school and universities) in Lebanon perceive the role and value of SAT outside the U.S.

Chapter Two – Background to the Research

2.1 Introduction

The means of deciding access to tertiary places is increasingly a contested issue. The impact of globalization on a post-colonial nation state makes the current complex education system in Lebanon a cause for concern. From the beginning, universities have incorporated tensions between national realities and international trends. The purpose of this research is to explore the impact of international standardised tests such as SAT on all stakeholders and the implications of the changing requirements. This chapter provides a context by outlining the history and development of the Lebanese education system and the growing mobility and access to tertiary education. It explores the role of English and the teaching of English.

2.1.1 Lebanon: Historical Background

Until the end of the First World War, Lebanon's history witnessed a succession of foreign powers. During the 400 years of the Ottoman reign, Lebanon, then part of Syria, was just a little province of the Turkish Empire. After the Sykes-Picot agreement, an Anglo- French deal on the partition of the Ottoman Empire, the French were granted control of coastal Syria, Lebanon, Cilicia, and Mosul while the British took control of Baghdad, Basra and Northern Palestine. Both Syria and Lebanon were placed under French mandate, with France claiming responsibility for making them independent. (Chapman, 1964) For the first time in Lebanon's long history of foreign domination and after two decades under the mandate, Lebanon was declared a republic in 1943.

Largely through systems of private education, three major types of school were established: British and American, French and Lebanese. The English and American systems (frequently referred to simply as American) lead to study in the American University of Beirut which has English as the principal language of instruction. The French system, with French the medium of instruction, closely follows the French instructional pattern, proceeding by way of rigid examinations to the *Baccalauréat*, followed by university degrees and the *Licence* from St. Joseph's University. The Lebanese system closely follows the French instructional pattern and leads to the Lebanese National University, founded in 1951. (Chapman, 1964)

2.1.2 The Secondary Education System

The 1946 post-independence reforms saw the centralisation of State authority in education. However, only about 40% of school-age learners attend government schools (referred to as 'public' schools), although this figure exceeds 50% at upper secondary level (Nahas, 2010).

Private secondary education had been a key component of the system in Lebanon for more than a hundred years (Frayha, 2003). Secondary education in Lebanon (both public and private) is under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) in partnership with the National Centre for Education and Research (NCERD). Both collaborate for curriculum and selection of textbooks. If schools wish to include additional courses, they are permitted so long as they meet regulations regarding curriculum and language. A mastery of Arabic is mandatory. Until 1949, all secondary schools in Lebanon were private until the government embarked on a program of expansion in the secondary field – a program modelled almost entirely upon the French system. This is when the emphasis on passing a government examination for the Baccalaureate certificate came as a requirement for completion of Upper Secondary School. Despite the many good schools following the French model, a greater number of the American model schools are firmly established in Lebanon. Upper secondary schooling is of three years' duration and involves students being channelled into specialised subject tracks by Year 12, at the end of which they sit the Lebanese Baccalaureate examinations. The Lebanese Baccalaureate was developed from its French predecessor with the additions of Arabic language and philosophy, and a shift in focus from French to local history and geography (Bashshur 1978; Frayha 2003). 1968 witnessed the introduction of a three-track system (Philosophy, Mathematics and Experimental Sciences) and English became a language option alongside French for Mathematics and Sciences. The 1997 reforms introduced the four-track system, which remains in force: General Science (but without Biology), Life Science, Sociology & Economics and Philosophy & Humanities. The allocation of students into one of these tracks is strongly dependent on scholastic ability, with students whose future majors entail intensive maths and physics being channelled into General Science, intensive biology into Life Science, and so on. The names of tracks reflect concentrations; all students actually undertake a mixed curriculum, although the amount of time spent on any given subject varies among tracks. Mathematics and Sciences are taught and examined in French or English, as Philosophy also may be (but not Arabic Philosophy, which is taken only by Philosophy & Humanities students). Depending on the track, students sit between nine and eleven

examinations for the Lebanese Baccalaureate. Pass rates vary significantly among the four tracks, being 75% + for General Science and around 60% for Philosophy & Humanities. Transition rates to tertiary education are very high for passing candidates and the principal function of upper secondary schooling in Lebanon may be regarded as tertiary-preparatory (Vlaardingerbroek, Dallal, Rizkallah, & Rabah, 2007). There are elite private schools which offer overseas qualifications, particularly the French Baccalauréat and the International Baccalaureate, both of which are given equivalence with the Lebanese Baccalaureate. Students who hold only Lebanese nationality are obliged to enrol in programmes leading to the Lebanese Baccalaureate, although they can do the French one instead. Some elite Anglophone private schools offer the American High School Diploma, although this is not given equivalence. Students holding foreign passports may obtain ministerial permission to enrol in an alternative programme (i.e. the IB or American schooling). (Vlaardingerbroek, Dallal, et al, 2007)

2.1.3 The Lebanese Higher Education System

Three features exemplify the Lebanese higher education system, most notably the private sector. These are the religious and secular domination of the establishment, the foreign origin of the institutional pattern as well as the challenges of indigenisation of the universities as part of the developing process. The religious and secular domination of the distinct universities and their response to indigenisation varies considerably. The institutional patterns followed by the universities of Lebanon are derivatives of the French, American and Egyptian models of the modern university, with appropriate adaptations to particular circumstances. (Hasrouny, 2011)

The history of higher education in Lebanon dates back to the second half of the 19th century when Syrian Evangelical College, since renamed The American University of Beirut (AUB), was founded in 1866, followed by Saint Joseph University (USJ) in 1883. The Lebanese American University (LAU) evolved mainly from 1924 when it started providing college-level education for girls after being a boarding school for a few decades.

Later in the mid-20th century, the establishment of the Beirut Arab University (BAU) and the Lebanese University (LU) furthered access and participation (Hasrouny, 2011).

The sector has been largely built on the reputation of such well-established institutions, as well as on the general role that Lebanon played before the 1975-1990 civil war in educating

generations of Lebanese and non-Lebanese Arabs and providing quality education in a challenging regional context. Given that the resident population of Lebanon in 2005 was 4 million, the ratio of students in higher education (including vocational institutions) for every 100,000 people is 0.41 (LAES, 2006). This ratio is one of the highest in the Arab region. According to 2009 UNESCO data, higher education in Lebanon has rapidly expanded in the past decade, with a 50% increase in enrolment and a rise to 54% in the number of people who are eligible for higher education. According to the 2011 statistics report from the Centre of Research and Development Plan, there were 38 universities operating in Lebanon during the academic year 2009-2010. Among these, there is one public university, the Lebanese University, and 37 private universities. The three universities alluded to in this study are all private and run the American Credit system.

2.1.4 Backdrop of Foreign Language Education in Lebanon

During the period of the Ottoman rule (1516-1918), Lebanon managed to maintain a great degree of autonomy, mainly because of the nature of its religious makeup, a multi-sectarian one composed of six main communities: Maronite Christians, Greek Orthodox Christians, Shiite Muslims, Sunni Muslims, and Druze. According to Shaaban and Ghaith (1999), this multi-sectarian society prompted European countries to support communities in Lebanon that shared the same religious faith. Thus, France supported the Maronite and Catholic Orthodox, and Turkey with the Muslims.

Following the establishment of these ties between the various Lebanese religious communities and the West, competing missionaries arrived in Lebanon and established several schools that exposed the Lebanese to Western cultures and language. According to Shaaban and Ghaith (1999), the most active of these missionaries were the French Jesuits and the American Protestants. The French Jesuits established strong relations with the Maronite Christians and founded several schools based on the French system of education, including, in 1875, the institution of higher learning now known as the University of Saint Joseph, which uses French as the language of instruction in most subjects and is still considered a strong cultural link between France and Lebanon. American missionaries also founded several schools, including the well-known American University of Beirut (AUB), previously known as the Syrian Protestant College, which was founded in Beirut in 1866 by American Protestant College missionaries in Lebanon and Syria at a time when Beirut was part of Syria under Ottoman rule. AUB, which uses English as the medium of instruction, later came to be viewed as the leading institution of higher learning in the Middle East. The existence of such

a prestigious American institution in Beirut has had an impact on the role and status of the English language in Lebanon. In a country largely influenced by the French language and French culture, AUB was a major factor in promoting the American system of education and the English language in Lebanon.

2.2 Political Affiliations

Political affiliations, which are closely linked to religious background in Lebanon, are also influential in shaping Lebanese students' motivations and attitudes towards learning foreign languages. There was resentment among Muslims and accusations levelled at the French creating "a Christian political and economic elite well versed in French with no allegiance to Arabic, the native language of the land" (Shaaban & Ghaith, 1999, p. 4). The dominance of French over English remained even after Lebanon's independence in 1943. However, in 1946 a foreign language curriculum was introduced whereby both French and English were required. Until the 1960s, when the Lebanese – as other people around the world – realised the importance of English in science, technology and employment, especially in the Gulf area (Shaaban, 2005), English started to gain dominance and popularity. This realisation has led an increasing number of the Lebanese of different religions and sects to choose English as their first foreign language as it is regarded as the language of business, science, technology, and politics. However, their choice is based on practicality rather than ideology. Kraidy (1998) aptly points out that Lebanon apparently suffers from an "identity crisis." Is Lebanon, as Lebanese nationalists argue, "a unique country with Phoenician ascendance, Western affinities, distinct from its Arab environment" (p. 3) or is it an inseparable part of the Arab world, sharing the history, culture and national identity of its neighbouring countries? This conflict is important to consider when analysing Lebanese students' motivation to learn Western foreign languages and seeking to excel in them to ensure places at tertiary institutes and to cope in a predominating Western world. According to Shaaban (1999), using English or French as a medium of instruction can be considered "a form of conscious identification with the West" for some groups in Lebanon, who feel that knowledge of foreign languages and cultures, namely French and English, "sets them apart from the rest of the Arabs and brings them closer to the western heritage" (Al Abhath, p. 25).

2.3 Socio-economic Impact

Socio-economic status plays an important role in the choice of school students enrol in, and consequently, in the kind of EFL education they receive. There are great differences in

teachers' qualifications and instructional programs among the various schools in Lebanon; private schools in Beirut are known to be more rigorous and have higher standards of education and stronger foreign language programs than public schools and many schools outside Beirut (Shaaban & Ghaith, 1997). Most middle-class and upper-class families enrol their children in private schools that have strong English or French programs and their language as a medium of instruction. Indeed, according to Shaaban and Ghaith (1999), the educational inequalities today are mostly the result of socio-economic rather than sectarian divisions; lower-middle and working classes cannot financially afford expensive private schools with strong English programs and therefore do not have much chance of professional and social advancement. Many indicators reveal the heterogeneous character of the Lebanese educational system. In Lebanon, the public sector accommodates only 37% of students enrolled in the educational system, and education as a whole is controlled mostly by private institutions. However, important discrepancies exist at various levels. From the perspective of both economics and social equity, public provision of education is normally expected to be greatest at the lower levels of education and to diminish at the higher levels (Nahas, 2010).

2.4 Changes and Trends

Since 1997/1998, the Lebanese educational system has been undergoing a series of structural reforms aimed at updating curricula and teaching methodologies while making educational programs more relevant to the needs of regional and global markets. These are the first educational reforms to be implemented since 1968.

A committee set by the (Lebanese) National Centre for Educational Research and Development (NCERD) aimed at developing an EFL curriculum to be implemented nation-wide in Lebanon. Shaaban and Ghaith (1997), coordinators of the work of this committee, identify three main goals of teaching EFL in Lebanon, based on both the principles of a new education policy in post-war Lebanon as well as contemporary thoughts in the fields of curriculum planning and foreign language education: "using English as a medium of instruction in content areas; using correct and appropriate English academically, socially, and culturally" (p. 201). Thus, the English language obviously holds greater power in the Lebanese context, paving the way for all those who seek to advance academically, socially or professionally in English. Hence, this is why many of the students need good competency in either English or French, or in both. Parents encourage their children to acquire a foreign language because of the global trends and innovations that have played a major role in the internationalisation of higher education. Because today's high paying jobs require

international travel and communications and awareness of technological advances and their application in the workplace, education is losing its role as a national integration machine and becoming a derivative of the global market (Collis, 1999). The control of English skills at more advanced levels, as measured by a numerical score on a commercial test, becomes a principal form of 'cultural capital'. In turn, the entrenched global proficiency exams in effect control the students and how knowledge of English is defined (Shohamy, 2001a). Moreover, qualification in English as measured by high-stakes commercial testing has become a key transitional achievement in Lebanon where students are socialised into highly "individualistic practices of competitive survival and self-responsibility" (Mulderrig p14, 2003), central to neoliberal value systems within a global certified society. The English Curriculum was revised as a part of the Educational Reform Plan in Lebanon after the devastating and destructive Civil War (1975-1990). According to former Minister Michael El-Daher, the general aim of this educational reform was

> to develop the capacities of the Lebanese citizen and direct each individual to serve the nation in light of an Educational philosophy based on the Lebanese Constitution enacted by the Constitutional Law number (18) issued on 21/9/1990, and based, in, letter and spirit, on the provision of "National Reconciliation Document" which the Lebanese accepted in compliance with Al-Taif Agreement. (NCERD, 1994, p. 7)

El-Daher added that the plan would improve "the effectiveness of the teaching programmes and the compatibility of this effectiveness with the needs of the society and the requirements for its revival and development to establish a better future" (NCERD, 1994, p. 7).

The Reform was sponsored, financed and coordinated by the Lebanese National Centre for Educational Research and Development (NCERD) of the Ministry of Education, which was called the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sport then. A relatively large Lebanese team (102 educators comprising university professors as well as school coordinators and teachers who belonged to different religious sects) was divided into committees who were given samples of national curricula from around the world to guide their work in developing the National Curriculum. Thus, the revised National Curriculum underscores the need for every Lebanese to be proficient in a foreign language (NCERD, 1994, p. 12). The revised English Curriculum aims to develop Lebanese students' English proficiency at three levels: "English for social interaction, English for academic purposes, and English for socio-cultural development" (NCERD, 1997, p. 72). As a result, all students (selecting English as their first

foreign language) are exposed to English as early as nursery or grade 1- whereby students if entering nursery (now called KG1) would be 3 and those entering grade 1 would be turning 6. (Shaaban, 2000, p. 306). Moreover, to help students develop proficiency in the foreign language, the current curriculum allocates the same number of hours for the native language and English at all levels.

2.5 The Role of Government in Higher Education

All forms of education in Lebanon are governed by the Ministry of Education and Higher Learning (MEHL); its current structure dates back to 1959. (Nahas, 2010) In 1971, Decree 2356 established the Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD) as a public institution with financial and administrative independence, supervised by the Minister of Education and Higher Learning. Currently the decision-making process in the ministry is divided between two management units, the General and Vocational Education Unit and CERD. The higher education unit, established in 2007, supervises all aspects of higher education but has no executive decision-making power. Most of the higher educational institutes were established in the late 1990s and early 2000s. According to (Nahas, 2010), because the education sector lacked any strategic vision and governmental monitoring, the spurt in university growth was uncontrolled and sporadic with no sense of vision other than profitability and business.

2.5.1 American-style Institutions

Some Lebanese universities and colleges have been established in the style of United States higher education institutions. These include American University of Beirut, the Lebanese American University of Beirut, Hariri Canadian University (now Rafik Hariri University), Haigazian University, Notre Dame University of Louaize and Balamand University, which are the ones in most demand. The entrance requirements, programmes of study and grading scales of these institutions are patterned after those of US institutions, and the language of instruction is English. In the US the two main tertiary entrance exams used are the SAT and ACT. The former is used as an entry requirement for the aforementioned universities in Lebanon. The SAT is a college admission test published by the College Board. Originally SAT was called the Scholastic Aptitude Test, but later was changed to Scholastic Assessment Test and now simply known as SAT Reasoning test. (College Board, 2012) This study will include discussions of the first three, AUB, LAU and HCU, with primary focus on AUB and LAU.

The American University of Beirut (AUB) was founded in 1866, and bases its educational philosophy, standards and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centred research university, AUB has around 700 instructional faculty members and a body of around 8,000 students. The University encourages freedom of thought and expression and seeks to graduate men and women committed to creative and critical thinking, life-long learning, personal integrity, civic responsibility and leadership. The University was granted institutional accreditation in June 2004 by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools in the United States, reaffirmed in June 2009. It includes six faculties: Agricultural and Food Sciences, Arts and Sciences, Engineering and Architecture, Health Sciences, Medicine (which includes the Rafik Hariri School of Nursing), and the Suliman S. Olayan School of Business. AUB currently offers more than 120 programs leading to Bachelor's, Master's, MD and PhD degrees. The University became coeducational in 1922; males and females are represented in equal proportion. The language of instruction is English and the ratio of students to faculty is 13 to 1 (Catalogue, 2014).

The Lebanese American University (LAU) was founded as a school for girls in 1835 by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. In 1950, when LAU was known as Beirut College for Women, it was granted a provisional charter by the Board of Regents and an absolute charter five years later. Since then, the charter has been amended several times in response to the institution's growth. A charter amendment in 1999 allowed LAU to grant Bachelor of Engineering, Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy and Doctor of Pharmacy degrees. In September 2005 the Board of Trustees approved the 2005–2010 Strategic Plan, focusing on academic excellence, enrolment management, information technology, public relations and marketing, fund raising, and finance and administration. Two years later, in May 2010, LAU was granted full accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. In July 2008 the official ground-breaking of the Gilbert and Rose-Marie Chagoury School of Medicine took place. The first M.D. class was admitted in September 2009 and graduated in July 2013 (Catalogue, 2014).

Rafik Hariri University was established in September 1999 with a School of Business Administration, according to the presidential decree 1947, dated 21/12/1999, with an intake at the time of seventy-five students. Seven years later its Colleges of Engineering and Science and Information Systems were established. RHU was granted university status on 19/06/2006, by Decree Number 17192. The programs of study at the Rafik Hariri University

were developed in association with a number of Canadian institutions, including the Canadian Bureau of International Education (CBIE), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and Capilano College. Rafik Hariri University aims at providing quality education catering to the Lebanese and regional job market demands. (catalogue,2014)

2.5.2 Admission into Private Tertiary Education

Although the Lebanese Baccalaureate is one of the essential requirements for university admission, it neither improves the student's chances of being accepted in an Anglophone university, nor does it compensate for other standardised tests, such as the SAT , EEE, IBT and IELTS. The little research that exists indicates that the reliability of the Lebanese Baccalaureate and its relevance is increasingly under question and that the Baccalaureate is being supplemented by international tests such as the IB, SAT and IELTS and TOEFL. During the period 1991-2006 the English Entrance Exam (EEE) and Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) were the only two entrance exams used for admission. These tests were administered by the Department of English at both AUB and LAU. After that period the SAT was introduced, but there was little public information about these changes. Only applicants who sought entry learnt about these changes through each university's annual catalogue. Currently, admission decisions are made based on students' academic school grades and the SAT result. All admission decisions are conditional upon evidence of completion of the Lebanese Baccalaureate and evidence of having met the English language proficiency requirement. Vlaardingerbroek (2008) noted that the elite American-style universities award the SAT a high weighting in the admission decision-making process. Hence, SAT is primarily used to demonstrate English proficiency and is required of all undergraduate applicants except junior and senior transfer students and visiting students. Each student is responsible for registering and taking the exam. Applicants planning to enrol during the Spring semester must take the test by the November testing session of the previous year. Students applying for the fall semester must take the SAT by the December testing session of the year before their planned enrolment. For students who take the test more than once, the University computes the highest score achieved in each of the critical reading and mathematics sections.

Chapter Three – Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This study examines the changing requirements for university entry in Lebanon and the effect such changes are having on the secondary and tertiary systems, on students and teachers and on the curriculum. The project explores the stakeholders' perceptions of the nexus between senior secondary school and university entry. It questions whether the changes are bringing greater flexibility and equity to the education system or whether they are entrenching existing inequalities. The previous chapter discussed the background to the secondary and tertiary systems of education in Lebanon, their complexity and the traditional gap between private and government schools / universities and between secondary and tertiary levels, a gap which exists in all countries but one which is particularly problematic in the complex postcolonial context of Lebanon.

This chapter will review research into the secondary/tertiary nexus: the impacts of globalisation and the ways in which systems have responded to higher rates of high school completion and greater competition for tertiary places. It addresses the research into changes relating to trends in admission requirements and the increased demand for accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in a globalised higher education environment. The first section reviews research into the pathways from secondary to tertiary education worldwide and then across the Arab world and in Lebanon in particular. The section explores research into the ways that entry to tertiary education has been decided, the gatekeeping mechanisms and their impact. There is a focus on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, the major test used in the US and now being adopted in Lebanon. It then looks into the role of language in multilingual contexts and migration, and analyses the research literature on language proficiency testing and assessment for tertiary entry. The particular focus is on research into IELTS and TOEFL, the main proficiency tests used in Lebanon. The third section examines research into the different uses and impact of testing and the responsibility and implications of the choices surrounding testing. This includes test impact and the social uses of testing and issues such as consequential validity and washback. Decisions around testing are not 'neutral' and this section reviews recent research into the responsibilities of test developers, test users and others. This then leads onto a review of internationalisation and globalisation and the broader factors in play, in terms of tertiary education entry changes. The scant research that exists into globalisation/internationalisation in Lebanon and the Arab world is also reviewed. This

section locates the research into tertiary entry and testing in ‘postcolonial’ contexts in terms of global changes. The final section draws from the research a theoretical framework that informs and underpins the study. This is derived from the approaches in the research literature and from reading around the research problem in the work of Bourdieu.

3.2 Transition from Secondary to Tertiary Levels of Education

With the development towards universal access to secondary education worldwide in the past decades, issues of access to tertiary education have been foregrounded in Europe and Asia (Salmi, 2013). Four of five young people between 10 and 15 years of age worldwide are now enrolled in secondary education. Participation has increased across the Arab world with some 75% of young people in Lebanon now completing secondary education. The growth in secondary education has led to competition for places in tertiary education, with demand far exceeding supply. Tertiary education provision ranges from 18% of the age group enrolled in tertiary education in countries like Greece and Portugal to 50% per cent in Australia and the UK, while the tertiary participation rate in Lebanon is now around 48% (Bradley, 2008). Consequently developments of admissions mechanisms to decide who gains entry have emerged across OECD countries. In many countries the entry requirements were traditionally secondary final year achievement tests, with moderation of these results to ensure ‘equity’. Increasingly, secondary school results are complemented with aptitude tests, ranking in specific areas and other indicators such as school recommendations and portfolios to determine entry.

The sole reliance on secondary school achievement results has also been tempered by several systemic changes. The diversity within secondary school systems in terms of curriculum, outcomes and grading, especially in federal systems, has led to the development of standardised assessment tests. The increase in non-school leavers, mature age students and international students has also led to many countries adding or replacing secondary school results with external/university controlled testing. In one study of 31 OECD countries it was found that secondary exit/tertiary entry examinations had increased in 29 of the countries in the previous two decades (Phelps, 2000).

Internationalisation, with a trend for students to study abroad, has meant that language proficiency in the language of study has also become important. Australia has the highest rate, at 20% international students among OECD countries, but tertiary study in other countries is now accepted practice in contexts such as Europe with the Erasmus program.

This has led to the burgeoning of the English language testing industry internationally, with IELTS and TOEFL the dominant tests.

None of the entry mechanisms are without problems, however, with research questioning the predictive ability of language proficiency testing and a bias of entry tests in terms of gender and SES. There have been problems in terms of equity of access using all indicators. (Akin, 2012) Socio-economic status, gender and ethnicity have emerged as the key variables influencing choice of and access to tertiary education. The following sections explore research into tertiary admissions tests and also English language proficiency testing. The review examines research into the reasons for the development, growth and application of admissions and language proficiency testing. The purpose of this is to gain an understanding of the adoption of these tests in the Lebanese context where little research exists.

3.3 Tertiary Admissions Tests

The role of tertiary admissions tests is central in the nexus between secondary and tertiary education. To what extent is tertiary education dependent on academic achievement in secondary education or to what extent is secondary education responsible for preparing students to meet tertiary requirements? The answer to these questions involves a power differential in the reliance on secondary achievement tests or tertiary aptitude tests. The research literature highlights several factors explaining the continued reliance on admission tests. Dating back to the eighteenth century and earlier (Stewart, 1998; Webber, 1989; Zwick, 2009), admissions tests are justified for a number of reasons. The first is the perception that these tests allow a more 'objective' assessment of student readiness for higher education and is fairer than school achievement tests (Drummond & DeYoung, 2004; Gabrscek, 2010). A second key argument for selectivity in tertiary admissions is the washback effect, and in particular, the fact it encourages high schools to provide a higher quality education (Wildavsky, 2012). Thus, tertiary admissions tests are seen as a way to bring about greater parity in and therefore equity in secondary education. Admissions tests have been favoured because of their perceived objectivity and positive impacts on secondary education.

There are numbers of studies of admissions tests, however, questioning their predictive validity because of the range of factors that impact on tertiary performance. Häkkinen (2004) compares if subject-related entrance exams or high school grades were better indicators of university performance. Häkkinen examined the data of accepted and rejected applicants to the Master's program in Technology at the Helsinki University of Technology in 1986, 1990

and 1995, and the Master's program of education, social sciences, and sports sciences at the University of Jyväskylä in 1992, 1995 and 1997. Using an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression method for analysis, Häkkinen found entrance exams to be a better predictor for selected majors, namely engineering and social sciences, but in education, the student high school grades were a better indicator. Analysing the GPA of 5,000 undergraduates at the University of California, San Diego, Betts and Morell (1999) found that "personal background, including sex, ethnicity, and family income," as well as the "socioeconomic environment of the school" have major impacts on university GPA (p. 288). Rantanen (2001 in Häkkinen, 2004), in his study of non-university tertiary education in Finland, found that 60% of the admitted students would have been admitted to the program on the basis of their high school performance. These findings question the predictive validity of admission tests in terms of performance in tertiary education. They also challenge the reliance on entry tests as the single or main requirement in determining access to tertiary study.

Several studies have questioned the perceived and real functions of admissions tests. Are these tests intended to measure specific academic achievement, or to assess intellectual aptitude for future study? The two – achievement tests and aptitude tests – can be viewed as endpoints of a continuum, with exams that focus on specific course material lying closer to the achievement test at one end of the continuum, while those that are less reliant on mastery of particular content falling near the aptitude test end (Zwick, 2007).

In addition to the predictive validity of university performance, admissions tests have also been criticised because of their social impact. Klitgaard (1985) stated the "first question to ask about selective admissions is why it should be selective at all" (p. 51). He noted that society in general has mixed feelings about selectivity. On one hand, it "has unpleasant connotations of elitism, unfairness, snobbishness, and uniformity" (p. 51). On the other hand, we "laud excellence, recognize its scarcity and utility, and endorse admissions on the basis of merit" (p. 51). The economic impact of admissions tests has been questioned by (Akin, 2012) who found that university entrance tests are a burden for both parents and students in developing countries, i.e., that these tests limit the number of students admitted to universities and increase both the parents' financial expenses and the students' anxiety.

This observation reaffirms the findings of the study conducted by Brown and Conley (2007), which underscore the need for examining the content of entry exams to determine their relationship to college-readiness criteria. Smith and Haslet (2007) investigated HE decision-makers in Aotearoa New Zealand's attitudes for admission purposes were leading to

consideration of more flexible pathways to entry. The term flexible as indicated by the authors does not mean easing out the process of gaining entry, but being more explicit concerning the needed skills for entry into higher education. Hence, there needs to be greater collaboration between schools and universities so that test takers and other stakeholders do not perceive themselves as under-informed and a smoother transition can happen (Salmi, 2013).

The second area of critical research relates to the way in which tertiary entrance mechanisms disadvantage specific groups of students. In Canada 75% of students from high-SES families gain entry to university compared with 49% of students from lower-income families. (Bradley, 2008) In Australia, students from Indigenous, rural and lower-SES backgrounds have much lower than average access to tertiary study (Bradley, 2008). One recent report concluded that "tertiary education … generally remains elitist, with the majority of enrolled students coming from wealthier segments of society" (Salmi & Bassett, 2014). Although relatively few countries and institutions systematically collect data on the socio-economic origin of students, the pattern of inequality is evident where national statistics and household survey data are available. In Lebanon, for instance, students with fewer social and economic resources tend to be drawn to public education, and in this case the Lebanese University (LU) and these students are seen as less successful and valuable on the labour market. This in turn tends to confirm and reinforce the image of poor quality (Nahas, 2011). In the francophone countries of sub-Saharan Africa, the children of the richest quintile account for 80% of the tertiary enrolment while those from the poorest 40% of the population group represent only 2% of the student population (World Bank, 2009).

3.3.1 The Scholastic Aptitude Test

This section critiques the research into the SAT, the major international tertiary entrance test, which was first introduced in the US in 1926. Interestingly, the test changed its name from the Scholastic *Aptitude* Test to the Scholastic *Assessment* Test. The test claims to assess students' 'readiness' for college and is intended to measure literacy, mathematics and problem solving required for tertiary study. It is offered in more than 175 countries outside the U.S., at over 1,000 international test centres (College Board, 2014). According to the National Association for College Admission Council (NACAC) in 2006, 94% of four-year colleges and universities considered the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), or the American College Test (ACT) scores in their undergraduate admissions. SAT is required for all undergraduate admissions and SAT-II is required for specific majors. Also, TOEFL is

required for international students seeking higher education in the U.S. Although the requirement of the secondary school report and transcripts (report cards) for the final tests, application form, and letters of reference (http://www.infozee.com/usa/app-procedure-ug.htm) is a mundane practice for admission, the major weight is given to test scores . Arguably, this indicates the weighting placed on university entrance exams such as SAT is the most significant in the student selection process. In the U.S., the most common approach to devising tertiary entry involves combining SAT results with other information such as high school class rank (HSCR) and grade point average (GPA).

The SAT test has a strong research base supporting its predictive ability, especially for higher performing students (Soares, 2011). There is also some research supporting the use of SAT in conjunction with high school grades, and findings that the use of the SAT has equally predictive accuracy for students from across a range of socio-economic groups (Jaschik, 2012). Recent research questions these findings. Three themes have emerged from this body of research: firstly, that the single best predictor of tertiary success is the high school record of study. Secondly, the SAT exacerbates social and cognitive stratification, and thirdly, there is a gap between what the test is supposed to measure and what it does measure (Soares, 2011)

High school information has consistently been identified as the best predictor of academic progress at university, and the additional value of SAT has been questioned. Some have argued that the SAT makes little difference to selection decisions (Crouse & Trushiem, 1988). One study, examining the potential use of SAT for admission into higher education in the UK, found that A levels and GSCEs were stronger predictors of future performance than the SAT, and that SAT scores would add very little useful information to admissions departments to allocate places in HE (Kirkup et al., 2010).

A number of studies have highlighted how culture affects the learners who are being assessed. Learners bring funds of knowledge that are ignored and undervalued by tests such as SAT1 (Arokiasamy, 2010; Geisinger, 1994; Moll, Amanti, & Neff, 1992). Two recurrent findings in SAT validity studies involving ethnic groups are that correlations of test scores with FGPA (Freshman Grade Point Average) tend to be smaller for Black and Hispanic students than White students. In a study of the relationship between language background and predictive validity of SAT, Pennock-Roman (1999) found that SAT verbal scores in particular were also lower for students with less proficiency in English. The original purpose of the SAT was to bring about more equity in college admissions in the US, but there is a

body of research showing that the SAT works as a test in favour of the privileged and discriminates against women, Black and Hispanic students (Ellwood & Kane, 2000; Lee, 2012; Soares, 2011)

All tests are designed for specific groups and for specific purposes, and uses beyond the original purposes raise questions of test validity. The predictive validity of standardised tests has been questioned, especially when tests are used in contexts and for groups beyond the original purpose (Hambleton, 2005).The use of SAT I in contexts outside the U.S. is an example of this. The SAT I contains content and language that ESL/EFL students could not realistically be expected to know, and it does not attempt to allow ESL/EFL learners to display what they actually do know.

The research then questions the predictive validity of the SAT in the North American context, particularly when it is used as the sole entry requirement. There is also a body of evidence indicating bias in terms of gender and ethnicity. Finally there is some evidence against the use of the SAT outside the contexts for which it was designed.

3.3.2 English Language Proficiency Testing

Post-war migration and the increase in the number of international students has meant that language proficiency assessment is part of tertiary entry processes in OECD countries. The Educational Testing Service (ETS) was founded in 1947 and is considered the world's largest private non-profit educational testing and assessment organisation. In total, ETS annually administers 20 million exams in the U.S. and in 180 other countries (ETS, 2014).

The impact of globalisation, competition for tertiary places and between universities for international students has led to a greater reliance on standardised English language testing (Marginson, 2004, 2006). This reliance has seen exponential growth in a language testing industry with tests such as IELTS and TOEFL (McNamara & Roever, 2006; Templer, 2004). The focus on language proficiency has meant that issues in terms of 'readiness' and skills, adaptation to different pedagogies, learning styles and cultural adjustment have been placed under the umbrella of English language proficiency (Ballard & Clanchy, 1997). The following section reviews the research into the predictive ability of English language proficiency testing.

3.3.3 Research into Predictive Ability of Proficiency Tests

The evidence is inconclusive as to whether proficiency tests such as IELTS and TOEFL are accurate predictors of tertiary performance rather than a test of English language proficiency at point of entry. Read and Wette (2009) argued that IELTS was primarily designed for entry to academic study and was "not specifically intended to assess the communication skills required in particular professions" (p. 4).

Hyatt's (2012) study found that research on the relationship between IELTS and academic performance has generated ambiguous conclusions. While Hill, Storch, & Lynch (2000) and Kerstjens and Nery (2000) found a positive but weak association between IELTS and academic performance, while Graham (1987) and Light, Xu, and Mossop (1987) found none. The general consensus of research studies of predictive validity of IELTS is that results can generally be predictive of language performance in the first year of tertiary study but that other factors come into play when predictive value in terms of "success" is measured, and language proficiency as measured by IELTS is only one of many factors (Murray, Cross, & Cruickshank, 2014). James (2010) adds that test designers and those administering tests should carefully monitor test performance in admissions contexts to ensure that testing accurately measures the language skills of all examinees. Edwards, Ran, and Li (2007) also highlighted the concerns of university teachers and administrators regarding the limitations of English tests used in relation to university admissions and expressed concern about the extent to which acceptance of students with English language skills well below native speaker competence represented a lowering of academic standards or was perhaps a pragmatic response to an increasingly globalised HE market. This confirms that the reliance strictly on an English admission exam is neither guarantee of success nor readiness for university study and that other variables account for academic success. The reliance on English language proficiency testing scores as sole predictor of being able to cope with the language requirements of tertiary study has thus been questioned.

Despite the wealth of literature about tertiary entry in English-speaking countries, there are few studies of tertiary entrance in countries such as Lebanon. The following section reviews the few studies of this context. Like the rest of the Middle East, Lebanon has had to address these challenges and ensure that school graduates have a strong command of English, hence, the country has been increasingly privatising its educational system. Masri (2009) discussed this phenomenon, evident in the increase in private universities in Lebanon from 19 in the

1990s (BouJaoudeh, 2000) to nearly 40 institutes in the following decade (Lebanese Association for Educational Studies, n.d.).

The Lebanese Baccalaureate, the traditional requirement for tertiary entry in Lebanon, has lost its significance as a university entrance determiner (Vlaardingerbroek & Shehab, 2012). The Lebanese Baccalaureate served to align upper secondary education with tertiary education and since 1933 it has been legislated as the entry qualification to professional programmes such as medicine and pharmacy, alongside the French and Syrian Baccalaureates and the American BA (Bashshur, 1978). Exceeding eight decades, the Baccalaureate has had a twofold function: as a certificate for completing secondary school education and as a permit to enrol at university, thus aligning the upper secondary with tertiary education (El Atia, 2008). This has changed in the past decade.

Firstly, the Lebanese Baccalaureate has been eroded both by internal factors, including widespread examination malpractice, and by external influences, particularly foreign tests, including the SAT (Vlaardingerbroek & Shehab, 2012). While the attainment of the Lebanese Baccalaureate, or a recognised equivalent, is a legal requirement for entry to undergraduate study, the level of academic achievement on the exam remains insignificant and does not influence university acceptance decisions (Vlaardingerbroek & Shehab, 2012). This implies that the achievement of the Lebanese Baccalaureate by terminal students counts for very little if these students are applying to an American-style university. One reason for this is the timing of the examination in the summer immediately preceding the new university year. Students applying to American-style universities will already have applied for entry to university and been notified about their acceptances, whereby admissions at that stage are conditioned by the student's attainment of the Baccalaureate (Vlaardingerbroek & Shehab, 2012). This situation is prominent at the Anglophone universities in Lebanon, most of which are American-modelled. (Vlaardingerbroek & Shehab, 2012) added that in these Anglophone universities, the SAT, has been an important instrument of selection, although its importance varies between universities. They explained that while at some universities the SAT functions as a mandatory test that is a principal determinant of admission, at others it is an optional test, serving as an alternative to the university's own admission or foreign language test, and at others still, mainly French modelled universities, the SAT is not counted at all among admission requirements.

3.4 The Impact of Entry Testing on Teaching and Learning

Decisions regarding tertiary entry are becoming critical with the increased competition for places and the roles of test developers and test users are being examined more frequently. This section of the literature review focuses on the impact of tertiary entry testing and the responsibilities for decisions surrounding testing. Where testing is instituted at the request or with the support of tertiary institutions the impact on secondary education and on the community in general is much greater than in contexts where secondary school achievement/completion is the main entry requirement. This section then examines research into how a number of high-stakes and low-stakes language exams in Middle Eastern countries affect teaching and learning at high school.

The question of predictive ability is part of the broader picture. Messick (1996) caused a redefinition of how test validity is theorised and his work led to the construct of the consequences of testing being counted as an integral aspect of testing validity. More recent work has investigated the social consequences of tests for test takers and users (McNamara & Roever, 2006) Standardised admissions tests thus also have social consequences on test takers. Universities still set their own entry requirements to meet global standards. In this section the research into both 'washback' and 'consequential validity' is reviewed. (Messick, 1996) The term washback expanded from referring to the way a test affects teaching materials and classroom management to broader impacts such as stress on test users (Alderson, 2004). The term 'consequential validity' is the embedding of these impacts in the construct of test validity (Messick, 1996). Although research into these two concepts comes from different areas they are discussed together in this section.

This focus on test users and test takers has been one outcome of the research into consequential validity. Shohamy (2000) noted that, in the past, test takers did not really have any rights. She added that it was understood that there was specific knowledge that the test taker should have, but that the body of knowledge was defined by those who wrote the tests and that the test taker was expected to comply with their decision. "Learning in itself has ceased to be the main factor [in college admissions]. The aptitude of the pupil is now the leading consideration and not the learning experience" (Gummere, 1943, p. 5). In other words, the education students receive during their journey through school and beyond is very much about the test.

The term washback, sometimes referred to as ‘backwash’ (Biggs, 1996; Hughes, 1989/2003), denotes the effect that exams have on teaching and learning (Cheng & Curtis, 2004; Green, 2007; Shohamy, Donitsa-Schmidt, & Ferman, 1996). With its focus on teaching and learning, the washback effect of an exam remains broader than its impact (Wall, 1997). According to Wall (1997), the impact of a test refers to its limited influence on “individuals, policies or practices, within the classroom, the school, the educational system or society as a whole”, whereas the washback effect reflects its broader influence on teaching and learning. However, this influence can vary.

The impact of the washback effect is influenced by a number of factors in teaching and learning. The washback effect might be either positive or negative (Hughes, 1989/2003; Messick, 1996). The term “direction” has been used by Alderson and Wall (1993) to refer to the extent to which washback is “harmful or beneficial” (Hughes, 1989/2003). In this respect, Shohamy et al. (1996) mentioned some of the areas in language teaching and learning that could be affected by testing, namely class activities, materials used, knowledge of the test, and the status of the language and test. Likewise, elaborating on the impact of testing on teaching and learning, Cheng and Curtis (2004) considered that the main consequences of the washback effect are that it leads to alignment between the test and the curriculum, and it encourages teachers to teach only what might be included in the test where there is a misalignment between the teaching and the test.

Messick (1996) used the term “consequential validity” to refer to using tests and modifying them in order to improve teaching. As such, tests do not affect only students and teachers, but also parents, inspectors and policymakers. Consequential validity refers to what happens to assessment results when used and interpreted in society. It is summarised by Sheperd (1997) as “the incorporation of test consequences into validity investigations”. The question of to what extent consequential validity is an independent concept is a subject of much discussion. Consequential validity has never truly stood alone as an isolated conceptualisation of validity, nor was it intended to be so. Messick (1993) describes the social consequences of testing as an integral part of validity, suggesting that it is not a stand-alone validity concept, but an important component of validity evaluation. In order to describe the extent to which an exam might influence teaching and learning, Cheng (1997) used the term “washback intensity” to refer to the degree to which an exam would affect different stakeholders. In turn, a number of variables could have an impact on the washback effect, such as the context of learning and

the learner's personal and psychological traits (Green, 2007). However, studies on the washback effect have mainly examined its impact on teaching and learning.

In light of the definition of washback, studies have mainly examined the impact of testing on teaching and learning, as well as on high- and low-stakes national and international tests. For instance, examining high-stakes national tests, Chapman and Snyder (2000) argued that tests can help as well as encourage teachers to improve their methods and instructions. However, the authors considered that testing does not always have a positive effect on instruction, especially that multiple factors, such as the willingness and motivation of teachers themselves to change their methods, have an impact on the relation between testing and instruction. Likewise, Ferman (2004) examined the effect of the EFL oral exam on teachers in Israel. Teachers spent more time preparing for the exam than exploring needed skills for postsecondary education and the workforce, and their teaching mainly focused on the test. Studies on the washback effect on instruction also took into consideration teaching materials. While developing an instrument to examine the impact of IELTS on teaching materials, Saville and Hawkey (2004) alluded to the impact of testing on textbooks. Hence, the impact of testing on teaching has been probed in numerous studies.

Other research has examined how testing influences learning. Amrein and Berliner (2002) found that in 18 states, high-stakes tests in the United States – namely ACT, SAT, NAEP and AP – did not always lead to student learning. The authors stated that "the high-stakes tests being used today do not … appear valid as indicators of genuine learning …" (p. 58). As such, their research revealed that high-stakes testing does not necessarily influence learning. Research by Ferman (2004) also revealed that the oral EFL test in Israel affected learning, whereby students not only learned on their own, but also requested the help of tutors. Andrews, Fullilove, and Wonga's (2002) study revealed that the introduction of the Use of English (UE) oral examination in Hong Kong affected students' oral skills. Usually administered during the final year of schooling, the UE is a high-stakes exam essential for university admission. As such, research on washback has examined the impact of testing on learning and teaching, as well as on national and international high- and low-stakes exams. Other studies did not merely examine teaching and learning, but also students' psychological states.

3.4.1 Test Impact of Proficiency Testing

The role of language proficiency tests such as IELTS in the tertiary entry process, their interrelationship with other entry criteria, and the impact and use of the test by test takers, test users and developers must all be considered.

There is a body of research indicating the impact of IELTS and other proficiency tests on test-takers' psychological well-being and social interactions, and thus the role of advising prior to and after testing is an issue in many studies (Viete, 1998; Wette, 2011). Findings from research into IELTS and international students at tertiary levels indicate that IELTS scores were taken by staff as an indication that students were able to cope with all the demands on tertiary study and that if problems emerged, this was the fault of the entry proficiency testing. There was little understanding of the range of support needs of students and of the need for continuing English language support (O'Loughlin, 2008). IELTS scores were not used to guide future English language learning and universities do little to monitor or evaluate their IELTS requirements (O'Loughlin, 2008). Test results and entry were managed and administered by professional staff and there was no flexibility or account taken of standard errors in achievement. In one study examining the stakeholders' perception of the IELTS, Hyatt (2012) found that test takers perceived themselves as under-informed of the nature and score interpretation of the IELTS as well as other English proficiency exams published by ETS and Pearson.

3.4.2 The Social and Psychological Impact on Stakeholders

There is research evidence of differential access in terms of SES to tertiary entry in Lebanon. Nahas (2010) found that the Lebanese educational system, which privileges private education at both the school and tertiary levels, seems to favour students from higher SES backgrounds, especially students who attend prestigious private high schools. The Lebanese Baccalaureate is increasingly viewed as a bureaucratic imposition emanating from a government education sector that serves the lower SES students and schools, i.e. those who cannot afford prestigious private education (Vlaardingerbroek & Shehab, 2012).

The research findings confirm those from studies in English-speaking countries, that the shift in tertiary assessment has increased gaps in access to tertiary education between high and low SES groups and students (Marginson, 2004, 2007). The situation in Lebanon is compounded by issues of language, culture and religion and a history of colonialism. Testing also impacts students' well-being. A Brazilian study revealed the impact high-stakes exams could have on

students' psychological well-being (Peluso, Savalli, Cúri, Gorenstein, & Andrade, 2010). The researchers examined the mood changes of 222 senior high school students during their preparation for the *Vestibular*, a high-stakes competitive exam which is the sole criterion for admission into public universities, whose quality exceeds that of private universities. The participants, 120 males and 102 females enrolled in a private school in Sao Paolo, answered the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS-X) that measured their mood in the previous week. Apart from answering the PANAS-X three times, once in March, once in August, and once in October, the students also predicted the time they spent studying in the week before each assessment. The results revealed that the students' Negative Affect increased as the exam approached, and it increased most the three months before the vestibular. Likewise, the more time students spent studying, the more their mood worsened. Findings also revealed that females were more anxious and more sensitive about examinations than males. As the study showed, high-stakes exams can have a great impact on students' mood and anxiety.

Hence, as studies have revealed, the washback effect strictly does not only pertain to teaching and learning, but also to students' psychological well-being, which could in turn affect the learning process.

At this point, it is significant to mention studies on washback have examined the impact of testing on teaching and learning in different countries in the Americas, Asia and Australia. The washback effect has been examined in countries such as Brazil (Peluso et al., 2012) the United States (Amrein & Berliner, 2002; Brown & Conley, 2012), New Zealand (Hayes & Read, 2004), Australia (Burrows, 2004), Japan (Watanabe, 2004), Iran (Mousavi & Amiri, 2011). and China (Andrews et al., 2002; Cheng, 1997; Qi, 2004), among others. The methodologies used in examining the impact of the washback effect have included questionnaires, interviews and document analysis (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Ferman, 2004; Shohamy et al., 1996). This is taken further in the next section.

3.4.3 Test Impact in Similar Contexts

This section of the literature review will mainly focus on studies conducted in Iran, Turkey and Israel that show how English exams have a washback effect on teaching and learning. In Iran, Yunus, Salehi, and Naeeini (2011) found that the Entrance Exam of the Universities (EEU) greatly influenced teaching. To begin with, teachers emphasised reading as the other three skills were not tested in the exam. Teachers also admitted that they did not adopt a

communicative approach in their classrooms for the sake of the exam. Likewise, about two-thirds of the teachers stated they supplemented English, the target language, with Persian, the home language, in the classroom. According to 80% of the teachers, the test also made them organise more practice exams. Yunus et al.'s (2011) study thus revealed that the nature of exams connecting secondary to tertiary education can affect teaching. In the case of the English component of the EEU, it has led to the emphasis of one skill over the other three, reduced communicative teaching in the classroom, and encouraged teachers not to use the target language when teaching. A similar study conducted in Turkey has further revealed how exams do not only negatively impact on teaching, but also on learning.

Although Yildrim's (2010) study differed from Yunus et al.'s (2011) in several aspects, it still highlighted the negative effect of multiple choice language testing for university admission in Turkey. To begin with, Yildrim examined the washback effect of a high-stakes exam, the English Component of the Foreign Language University Entrance Exam (ECFLUEE) that high school students need to take to be admitted to the EFL teacher training programs in Turkish universities. Second, Yildrim probed the impact of the ECFLUEE on students rather than teachers, measuring along with students' language proficiencies, their performance in their first year at university. Collecting his data through both interviews and a piloted questionnaire, Yildrim interviewed six instructors, and administered the questionnaire to 70 students and interviewed about ten. His study revealed that the exam, which consists of 100 multiple choice questions and mainly tests for reading, has negative effects on the students' proficiency and their performance in their first year at university.

The test negatively impacts on the students in a number of ways. First, it is time-consuming as the majority of students, more than 60%, spend years preparing for it. Second, the ECFLUEE did not trigger an improvement in the students' English skills as the medium of instruction during English classes was mostly Turkish. This confirms the finding by Yunus et al. (2011) that high school teachers of English in Isfahan communicate mainly in Persian in the classroom. Likewise, as in Yunus et al.'s study, students disregarded the writing, speaking and listening skills as they spent most of their time studying reading, grammar and vocabulary. In fact, the findings of Yildrim's study agreed with the results of another study conducted by Akpinar and Cakildere (2013) in Turkey. Akpinar and Cakildere found that the State Personnel Language Examination (KPDS) and Inter-University Foreign Language Examination (ÜDS), two tests mainly administered to academic personnel applying to a PhD program or for a promotion in Turkey, only have a positive impact on reading, but negative

impacts on the other skills – writing, listening and speaking. In this respect, learners in both studies spend a lot of time gaining knowledge of test-taking strategies and practising for the exam without developing their language and communication skills. The only extracurricular activity related to learning that students participated in was reading grammar books on their own. In an interview, one student even stated that everything about the exam had to do with memorisation. Yildirim (2010) highlighted the negative effect of the ECFLUEE by stating that "students spend a great amount of time and energy on practicing test taking strategies, most of which will not be useful for them starting from the day after the exam" (p. 113). Hence, the exam even fails to prepare students to become well-rounded and communicative EFL teachers. Interviews with instructors further revealed the exam's harmful impact.

In the interviews, instructors stated that the exam negatively affects students' language abilities. While it enables them to gain solid structural knowledge, it does not help them in communicative situations. They suggested the exam be less structural and more functional, that the multiple-choice questions be reduced, that texts be more realistic, and that questions rely more on critical thinking. Hence, Yildrim's (2010) research, like Yunus et al.'s (2011), sheds light on the negative impact of multiple-choice language exams linking high school education to tertiary education. Their studies reveal how such tests lead to non-communicative instruction, to the usage of the native language rather than the target language in classrooms, as well as to an emphasis on reading skills. As such, it would be interesting to compare studies conducted in Turkey and Iran to other studies conducted in the Middle East, namely Israel.

Shohamy et al. (1996) found that, in Israel, time had a negative impact on the washback effect of the Arabic as a Second Language (ASL) exam and a positive impact on the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) exam, which are respectively high- and low-stakes national exams. Years after the introduction of the exams, the ASL exam no longer has any strong impact on the teaching and learning of Arabic, mainly due to the low prestige of Arabic in Israel, whereas the EFL exam does promote the teaching and learning of English due to the importance of English in the country. The study has thus revealed how a number of factors can affect washback, namely the status of the exam, for the ASL is a low-stakes exam and the EFL a high-stakes exam; the status of the language, for Arabic has a low status and English a high status in Israel; the goal of the exam, for the ASL has no significant impact on students' futures; the format of the exam; and the skills that the exam tests, for the EFL tests only for

oral skills. Significantly, another study conducted a number of years later on the EFL exam revealed its negative washback effect.

Significantly, a study conducted by Ferman (2004) less than a decade after Shohamy et al.'s (1996) research, showed that the high-stakes EFL Oral Matriculation Test had a strong negative washback effect. Her study thus confirmed findings by Yildrim (2010) and Yunus et al. (2011). In fact, the oral test accounts for 20% of the English subject grade in the national matriculation exam that Grade 12 students sit for. Participants in the study included 18 teachers, 120 EFL students, and four inspectors. Ferman conducted her study by administering structured questionnaires for students, structured interviews for teachers, and open interviews for inspectors, and by analysing documents such as the instructions of the Chief Inspector of English. In particular, she observed the impact of the exam on teaching and learning, the time given to study for the exam, the teaching strategies used, the learning strategies used, the promotion of learning, the parental involvement in the exam, and the anxiety level. Results revealed a clear negative washback effect on teaching as well as learning.

Teachers invested more time in preparing for the exam than the actual weight of the exam warranted, and the time invested increased as the exam date got closer. Teachers also extensively coached their students for the exam, and they narrowed the scope of their teaching, so as to focus mainly on what would be useful for the test. Despite all the time invested in preparing for the exam, teachers doubted that the test encouraged students to learn new language skills, and they even doubted that students read the required texts for the test. However, the test did not only affect teaching. It also affected students' learning as they had to memorise for it, increase their learning on their own, and request the help of tutors. More than 60% of the parents were involved in the test, encouraging students to study and hiring tutors. Ferman (2004) also found that the text aroused feelings of anxiety in both students and their teachers. Teachers were anxious because they had to cover all the material for the exam, and they feared the test results because these were made public and compared with the results of other sections. Students, for their part, mainly feared failing the exam. Indeed, students have the ability to do well on the exams, but perform poorly because of the debilitating level of anxiety. Consequently, test anxiety may limit educational development, as test scores and grades influence entrance to many educational or vocational training programs in modern society (Zeidner, 2006). As such, the oral EFL exam had a negative impact on both teaching and learning.

The studies conducted in the Middle East on English exams essential to university admission have mostly revealed the negative impact of such exams on teaching and learning. Such exams clearly affect teaching, whereby teachers tend to allocate a lot of time for these exams (Ferman, 2004), and they mainly focus on what is being tested, do not adopt a communicative approach to their teaching, frequently rely on the native language in teaching, and administer numerous practice exam (Yunus et al., 2011). Likewise, most of these exams have a negative impact on learning. Apart from being time consuming, these exams encourage students to mainly focus on what is being tested and to disregard enhancing their communicative skills (Yildrim, 2010). In addition, many of these exams could increase students' levels of anxiety. As such, language exams used for university admissions negatively affect the instructors' teaching at a high school level, and consequently, the students' learning. In particular, these tests lead to an emphasis of one skill over the others, and do not encourage the use of the target language as well as communicative approaches in the classroom.

While some institutions have long-established practices that are well entrenched in their collegiate culture and underlying missions, the general state of admissions has become increasingly dynamic. Changing demographics, economics and the political, legal, social and educational environment of the times have prompted many institutions to review and modify their approaches to selecting students. However, the control of English skills at more advanced levels is being measured by a numerical score on a commercial test that is becoming a principal form of 'cultural capital as the entrenched global proficiency exams in effect control the students and how knowledge of English is defined (Shohamy, 2001a). The next section will be exploring remedial programs at university and their effectiveness.

3.4.4 The Impact of Testing: The Growth of Remedial Programs at University

The growing diversity in tertiary student populations has led to the growth of remedial and support programs in universities. Any review of research into the consequential validity of testing must also consider the impact on tertiary education. This section reviews studies on remedial programs at universities in the United States and Lebanon. It particularly focuses on the negative impact of remedial programs on students, on students' own perception of these programs and on how remedial programs may affect students' choices of whether to enrol or not in higher education. The section ends by examining some of the solutions for the improvement of remedial programs.

Prior to examining the impact of remedial programs on students, it is important to probe the need for remedial programmes in higher education. In fact, Brock (2010) established that while "access" to higher education has increased, "success" in higher education, as determined on the basis of continuity in college and attainment of degree, has diminished (p. 110). Studies conducted in the United States show that about 40% of students admitted to community colleges and about 25% of students admitted to four-year colleges have to take at least one remedial course in reading, writing or maths (Brock, 2010). Other studies even suggest that about 40% of those who attend a four-year college and 60% of those who attend a community college have to take at least one remedial course (Tierney & Garcia, 2008). The high percentage of students taking remedial courses may be attributed to the fact that only one-third of the American students who graduate from high school actually meet the requirements of four-year colleges (Greene & Forster, 2003). Remedial programmes thus become a need for under-prepared students enrolling in four-year colleges (Bettinger & Long, 2005). While remediation primarily seeks to better prepare students for higher education, research shows that its results are not entirely positive. Most studies suggest that remedial programs have a negative impact on stakeholders: students, parents and colleges. With respect to students, Tierney and Garcia (2008) considered that remedial courses sometimes prevented students from graduating. Similarly, Brock (2010) revealed that students taking remedial courses often drop out of classes or college, and while those who stay do progress, they do so only slowly. He also stated that remedial courses delay the students' graduation from community colleges. Brock further mentioned that remedial courses lead to discrimination between students who are considered ready for college, and those who are not considered ready yet. According to him, "remedial education programs often do a better job of weeding students out than helping them advance to college-level courses and degrees" (Brock, 2010, p. 126). Hence, remedial programs do not benefit students as much as they harm them. Remedial courses also pose a financial burden on parents. As Nasser and Goff-Kfouri (2008) established, parents believe that remedial programmes make them pay for "the same education twice" (p. 85). Finally, remedial programs also negatively affect colleges as their costs are exorbitant (Bettinger & Long, 2005). Despite the apparent negative impact of remedial programs, other studies conducted in the United States suggested that they might also have a positive effect.

Koch, Slate, and Moore's (2012) study of how two males and a female enrolled in remedial courses at a community college perceived their experience sheds light on the positive impact of community colleges. On the emotional level, students' perception of remedial courses

changed. While prior to enrolling, students perceived remedial courses negatively, eventually, at the end of the courses, they had a more favourable opinion of remedial programs. On the academic level, students felt frustrated that their high schools had not prepared them for college. However, at the end of the courses, they felt satisfied with their developments. In addition, in terms of behaviour, most students worked hard for their courses, and they were overall satisfied by the behaviour of their teachers. Likewise, they agreed that college resources such as math and writing labs were quite helpful. Most significantly, all participants agreed that the developmental courses were beneficial and would help them meet their long-term learning goals. The significance of Koch et al.'s (2012) study is that it challenges research that highlights the negative effect of remedial programs. Furthermore, it shows how students' perception of remedial courses changes as they are enrolled in them. Indeed, while prior to enrolling in the courses, students felt humiliated, at the end of the courses, they felt more satisfied. As such, research conducted on remedial programs in the United States reveals both their negative as well as positive repercussions. Some studies have also examined remedial courses in Lebanon.

Remedial programs in Lebanon differ from those in the United States. Nasser and Goff-Kfouri (2008) explained why remedial programs in Lebanon and the Middle East are different from the U.S. and other European programs. According to them, because schools in Lebanon have been influenced by French missionaries, many students have to take remedial courses as a result of the transition from a school that follows the French system to a university whose language of education is mainly English. It is important to note that even students whose first foreign language is English may also need to undergo remedial courses because of their failure to meet language competency upon entry into an American-style university (Diab, 2005). The authors also highlight a discrepancy between what schools perceive to be the required language or mathematics courses, and what universities perceive as necessary. An important reason for evaluating remedial programs in higher education stems from the need of parents and students to relinquish the financial burden precipitated by remedial courses. Still, evaluative studies have not received enough attention from private or public universities in Lebanon and the Middle East. In light of this, it is important to examine the literature on remedial programs in Lebanon.

The research conducted on remedial programs in Lebanon is too scarce to judge. For instance, Bacha and Bahous (2011) hint at how some Lebanese universities offer remedial programs to students who have not passed the entrance exams. They also point to the fact that

some of these programs are not being assessed. Perhaps one of the most extensive studies on the impact of remedial courses is Nasser and Goff-Kfouri's (2008). The two authors studied the impact of remedial courses assigned to students on enrolment in a private university in Lebanon. They also wanted to examine whether remedial courses have an impact on the knowledge of English and academic performance. Nasser and Goff-Kfouri established that placement in remedial programs in Lebanon is based on either entrance exams or the SAT along with high schools averages. Otherwise, students are immediately placed in the normal program. Interestingly, according to the authors, the majority of universities in Lebanon offer remedial programs and compete to attract students do not meet the requirements. In addition, Lebanese universities neither meet nor agree on remedial standards. Results revealed that students assigned three remedial courses are discouraged from applying to a private university. Moreover, the authors found that the more English remedial courses a student takes, the better his performance is. In general, students who succeed in remedial courses will succeed in their other academic courses, and students who do not succeed in their remedial courses will remain weak in their other courses. However, the authors were not able to establish whether success in English remedial courses prepares students better for the regular programmes. According to the authors, it remains to be seen how Lebanese universities will be able to balance their open admission policies with academic standards. Nassar and Goff-Kfouri's research thus partially supports research conducted in the United States. It reveals that students assigned too many remedial courses may be discouraged from enrolling in a private university.

In light of the perceived challenges of remedial programs, research has proposed solutions to try to resolve the issue. Brock (2010) suggested that colleges adopt strategies that will increase student success and that more research be conducted to evaluate remedial programs. Similarly, Koch, Slate and Moore (2012) suggested that more attention should be given to instruction in remedial programs. Other authors, such as Tierney and Garcia (2008), have focused on the importance of helping students improve their writing before, during and after their final high school year. In turn, Nasser and Goff-Kfouri (2008) call for the consideration of other criteria in the assessment of students. According to them, a "further study would have to look at general ability components such as logical, spatial and kinaesthetic (see Gardner, 1983) or even intra- or inter-personal abilities" (p. 98). As such, different strategies can be adopted for increasing the effectiveness of remedial programs.

With open admission policies followed by the majority of private universities in Lebanon, the quality of discussion on the effect of remediation at universities in Lebanon is almost non-existent. Inter-university discussion among faculty about the scope, need and objectives of remedial or placement courses has raised important questions about what remedial programmes are doing to improve students' academic performance (Mazzeo, 2002).

The conventional practice is that students generally take entrance examinations or the Scholastic Aptitude Tests (SATs) with their secondary school grade point average and other criteria to judge whether they are eligible for admission and/or placement in a remedial programme. Otherwise, they enrol in the regular programme. Many universities around the world, specifically in Europe, do not require students to go through remedial programmes. Those who do not qualify for admission are channelled to enrol in technical colleges or are rejected altogether. However, with the open admission policy and enterprising international higher education system, universities now seek students rather than students seek universities. This reversal of the supply-demand approach has made many universities agile and sensitive to student needs in terms of the curriculum and programmes. Thus a review of remedial programmes has become a key aspect in the self-assessment that all universities go through for accreditation and strategic development.

Research has identified the pros and cons of remedial programmes, but still policy or rationale based on empirical evidence is lacking in the field (Mazzeo, 2002). In the absence of rigorous evaluation studies on the effectiveness and consequence of remedial programmes little can be said about what they 'really' accomplish. Notwithstanding this, evaluative studies have not received enough attention from private universities in Lebanon. The researcher, in fact, is not aware of one study that evaluates 'pre-university programmes' in Lebanon. Even in the U.S., research into the effectiveness of remedial education programmes has typically been sporadic, underfunded and inconclusive (Bers, 1987). Zahi and Skerl (2001) concluded from a comprehensive study on the effectiveness of remedial English courses at a four-year institute in the U.S. that such courses are effective in that they increase the success in regular English courses and subsequently in the retention of foreign language information and increase in graduation rates. Hoyt & Sorensen (2001), for instance, argue that students from high school are rather under-prepared, face low levels of academic preparation, are generously overrated in high school, and not on a par with the academic rigor expected at college. The opposing argument between academic administrators and faculty on

the one hand, and parents and students on the other, calls for assessment models that evaluate the worthiness and effectiveness of the remedial programs in higher education.

3.5 Globalisation in a Higher Education Context

The research into the growth of international testing and the development of IELTS, TOEFL and SAT were explored in the previous section. The issues of globalisation and internationalisation underpin these developments and are explored in this section. Globalisation is seen as the force acting as the root cause of changes taking place in higher education and can simply be defined as "… the flow of technology, economy knowledge, people, values, ideas … across borders (Knight, 1999, p. 14). Globalisation also brings with it a global awareness of the planetary perspective and enlarges our senses of time and space, which implies a greater sense of community within this global environment (Giddens, 1999). Burbules and Torres (2000) also see globalisation as a certain loss of nation-state sovereignty, or at least the erosion of national autonomy, and correspondingly a weakening of the notion of the 'citizen' as a unified and unifying concept, a concept that can be characterised by precise roles, rights, obligations and status. Despite the contradictory stances taken, most researchers would argue that we live in an age in which globalisation is the defining concept; it is a discourse that valorises particular economic prescriptions about how to control the economy, through free trade, deregulation and the like (Hirst &Thomson 1999) and by implication, prescriptions leading the reform of education, politics and culture. In line with Knight (1999), Altbach (2001, 2004) perceives an interrelationship between economy, technology and education. Hence, in their definitions of globalisation, both have revealed its impact on education, and in particular tertiary education, as well as its correlation with economy and technology. At the level of nations, the Council for Higher Education (2008) has confirmed that some Western countries are aiming at becoming global leaders in higher education, a fact that would enable them to improve their economy. In addition, these nations had to re-evaluate their curricula and programmes in order to make them adequate for the challenges of globalisation. In turn, globalisation has affected tertiary institutions as well as students in these countries.

The impact of globalisation on nation states, as analysed by Marginson (2006) highlights the dissimilarity between the terms *globalisation* and *internationalisation*. In the process of internationalisation, "national institutions and practices … essentially remain intact", whereas globalisation has "potentially transformative effects within nations" (p. 2.). Marginson (2006) critiques the impact of globalisation on national identity in the face of increasing pressure to

Americanise higher educational institutions to gain international acceptance. Paris (2003, p. 235) defines globalisation as an imposition "of ideas involving a dominant-recessive relationship. Internationalisation occurs when there is sharing of ideas, where ideas are utilised, agreed upon, and mutually accepted." In the same vein, Vidovich (2004, p. 444) notes that 'internationalism' refers more to multi-lateral relationships between nation states, whereas 'globalisation' focuses on the supranational and tends to be interpreted as an ideology which privileges market approaches to public policy making. In other words, internationalisation implies the continued existence of national borders whereas globalisation seeks to erode national borders.

3.5.1 Globalisation and Global English Impact

Globalisation is inextricably linked with issues of global English. Globalisation has also increased international collaboration on academic programs, particularly in tertiary education (Altbach, 2004), and has given the English language a major role in higher education (Altbach, 2006). Describing the importance of English in a globalised world, Altbach (2006) states:

> English is the Latin of the 21st century. English is used to communicate knowledge worldwide, to instruct (even in countries where English is not the language of higher education), and to implement cross-border degree programs. Higher education worldwide must grapple with the consequences of the dominance of English as a factor in globalization. … English is a ubiquitous language in higher education worldwide. (p. 66)

Thus, in the same way, the impact of global English on higher education has not been altogether constructive. Globalisation has led to inequality in access to higher education worldwide, increasing the educational divide between developing and developed countries. Dividing higher education between "centres" and "peripheries" (p. 65-66), that is, institutions being located in developed and developing countries, Altbach (2005) stated that it is extremely difficult for periphery institutions to move to the centre because of their lack of research facilities and information technology. He warned that "globalization must not turn into the neo-colonialism of the 21st century" (p. 72). Similarly, while Arokiasamy (2010) highlighted the fact that "globalization in higher education and science is inevitable", he cautioned against the "inequality" and "neo-colonialism" that could result from it (p. 10).

However, the negative effect of globalisation on higher education is not restricted to the divide between developing and developed countries.

Globalisation has also affected the cultural context of higher education and led to the capitalisation of higher education (Arokiasamy, 2010). On the one hand, universities must produce "de-contextualized and capital-oriented knowledge", and on the other, in "strongly multi-cultural countries", they must aim for "local and contextualized knowledge" (Arokiasamy, 2010, p. 5). In addition, Giddens (1999) considered that in today's globalisation era, knowledge is increasingly a commodity that moves between countries. Schools and colleges have, for example, become sites for branding and the targets of corporate expansion (Dimmock & Walker, 2000). Apart from commodifying knowledge, globalisation has also encouraged the "privatization of higher education" (Arokiasamy, 2010). There has been a move for governments to reduce the funding of higher education per student whereby grants have been replaced by loans, and undergraduates have to pay for their education (Rees & Stroud in Arokiasamy, 2010). Such impacts of globalisation can be perceived on a larger scale.

The impact of globalisation is clear in both Europe and Asia. In Western Europe, nations such as France and Germany are trying to use the contest of government funding as a way to make their universities competitive on a global scale (Wildavsky, 2010). In Malaysia, the government seems to have had a prominent role in promoting private higher education (Arokiasamy, 2010). By passing the Private Higher Educational Institutions Act in 1996 and its amendment in 2003, the government promoted "the establishment and upgrade of private universities, university colleges and branch campuses of foreign universities in Malaysia" (Arokiasamy, 2010, p. 4). Furthermore, long known primarily as the world's largest exporter of students, China is now doing much more to build its human capital at home. In addition to expanding the quantity and quality of its own universities, it is forging partnerships with Western universities that operate programs in China. Moreover, China is not alone nor is academic globalisation confined to Malaysia and China. The yearning to create competitive universities is also vividly apparent in Singapore and South Korea as well (Wildavsky, 2010). Hence, those held accountable such as the many policymakers automatically look to market 'solutions' (Altbach, 2004).

The impact and pervasiveness of these forces of globalisation also means that they should also be a fundamental focus for education and learning – but there are powerful currents running against honest work in this area. Wildavsky (2010) believes that knowledge is a

public good that many individuals and nations can use, so gains for one country need not harm others – quite the contrary. Thus, a turbo-charged university system that produces well-educated Malaysians and more significant research discoveries is good, not bad, for the rest of the world. Consequently, Robert Dingwall, director of the Institute for Science and Society at the University of Nottingham notes that if bureaucracy interferes with academic mobility, the vision for a world without borders where knowledge can flow freely becomes almost an impossible mission for the whole enterprise of international research collaboration (Dingwall in Wildavsky, 2010).

3.5.2 Globalisation and Universities in the Arab World

According to a 2011 UNESCO educational report, in 2008 enrolment in third-level education in the Arab world was 21%, lower than the world average of 26%. With rates of tertiary education rising rapidly in other developing areas of the world, such as Latin America and East Asia, this puts the Arab world at a disadvantage in an increasingly knowledge-based global economy. There is an emerging body of writing and research into the impact of globalisation on tertiary education in the Arab world. McBurnie commented (in Uvali'c-Trumbi'c, 2002) that globalisation raises new issues and throws a new light on some old issues which indicate the necessity for changes in how the higher education community thinks of itself in the global context and in how it shares problems and collaborates in the search for solutions. In their article "Access and Equity in Financing Higher Education in Arab Countries", Galal and Kanaan (2011) examined the main challenges the Arab countries are facing in higher education in a globalising world (p. 5). The authors found that although the number of private universities has increased in Arab countries, the "quality" of higher education in these countries did not improve because of several factors: the countries' "limited financial resources," and their lack of technological advancement and "academic freedom" (p. 5). The authors added that to resolve these issues, Arab countries ought to develop plans which address both the nations' and the job markets' needs, reform curricula to include "critical thinking and innovation", and encourage "academics and universities to deliver quality education" (p. 6).

In hindsight, Wildavsky (2010) points out that the lavishly funded King Abdullah University of Science and Technology opened in Saudi Arabia two years ago has sought to join the top ranks of world scholarships via alliances with the likes of Imperial College London and Stanford University.

3.5.3 Lebanon, the Domino Effect

Studies on globalisation also revealed its impact on higher education in Lebanon. Nevertheless, any discussion of tertiary education in Lebanon must take into consideration the way in which Lebanon differs from other Arab countries in the region. According to the National Human Development Report (NHDR) in 2001-2002, Lebanon seems to be at an advantage compared to other Arab countries in the region to adapt to globalisation. The same report describes some of the points which distinguish Lebanon from other countries:

> the mastery of the Arabic language and multilingualism, a forward-thinking private sector, a strong banking sector moving towards e-banking solutions, availability of various Internet services, competent human resources with diversified skills in ICT and other fields, an open media sector, and a comparatively supportive public sector that knows that one of the country's key assets lies in the services industry. (p. 22)

As such, the above mentioned features give Lebanon an advantage over other countries in the region, and they have had an impact on the country's higher education. This effect is reflected in a number of ways. In general, Lebanon has the lowest illiteracy rate in the region Nahas, 2011; NHDR, 2001-2002). Likewise, back in 1999, Lebanon had one of the highest rates of higher education enrolment: 3,283 students for every 100,000 inhabitants (NHDR, 2001-2002). Apart from the low illiteracy and high tertiary education enrolment rates, education, and in particular higher education in Lebanon, differs from Arab countries in a main aspect.

In Lebanon, the focus on higher education is on the private sector. Unlike most Arab states, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and Qatar where centralised state control has been a dominant characteristic of higher education (Al-Karyuti, 1996; Alkhazim, 2003; Mazawi, 2005), Lebanon's expansion came through the private sector. For instance, Galal and Kanaan (2011) stated that between 2005 and 2008, 1.5% of GDP was allocated to financing public higher education while 3% was allocated to financing private higher education. The two authors further pointed out that while the private sector has had a negative impact on higher education in Arab countries, it had a positive impact on Lebanon. Actually, this sector, encouraged by a tinge for profit, has worked toward the attainment of sustainable human development in the form of highly educated youth forming a mobile economic resource that Lebanon has spread to other nations in the region (UNESCO, 2011). The country's emphasis on education is highlighted by the fact that Lebanon also ranks third in the Arab world in

terms of the "expenditure on higher education per student to per capita income" (Galal & Kanaan, 2011, p. 6). Following Jordan (98%) and Morocco (90%), Lebanon has 84% expenditure on higher education per student to per capita income (Galal & Kanaan, 2011). Thus, Lebanon's private higher education is distinguished from other countries in the region, and in the past two decades higher education in the country has witnessed an unprecedented surge due to globalisation in higher education.

Over a period of 15 years, the number of higher institutions in Lebanon has increased by 200%, and the number of students by 50%. The NDHR for the years 2008-2009 revealed that in the early nineties, there were only 18 higher education institutions in Lebanon. Fifteen years later, in 2006, Lebanon had 38 accredited institutions (NDHR, 2008-2009). As the report further pointed out, "Criteria for their accreditation have never been clarified" (p. 130). Pointing out that within a period of four years, between 1996-2000, there were 23 new higher education institutions, Kaissi, Abou Chahine, and Jammal (2004) attributed this surge in higher education institutions to a need to "accommodate this growing demand for higher education in Lebanon". The authors referred to the fact that in 1995, there were about 115,000 students enrolled in higher education; in 2008, the number had risen to 173,000. Kaissi et al. (2004) added that today, "higher education in Lebanon is provided by 41 colleges and universities. Only one of them is a public institution: The Lebanese University." Hence, a close examination of higher education in Lebanon not only reveals that it is mostly private, but also shows that in recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of private tertiary institutions in the country.

The increase in the number of private universities and colleges in Lebanon has increased competition among these institutions. As a result, the quality of education became a major concern. Beset by a growing concern for quality, many universities have started to vie for accreditation in order to certify the high quality of their programmes, thus symbolising "full membership" in the international academic community (Mills, 2006). Currently in the Arabian Gulf, Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon is an attempt under way at improving higher education institutes through quality measures. Kaissi et al. (2004) stated that the Trans-European Mobility Scheme for University Studies (Tempus) project Quality Assurance for Higher Education in Lebanon (QAHEL) is one of the ventures aiming to ensure and plan for the quality of higher education in Lebanon. In this rat hysterical race for quality assurance, the national government in Lebanon has had little freedom to intervene. For example, private American-style universities set their own standards by imposing the SAT as an entry

requirement irrespective of the result obtained on the national external exam (Vlaardingerbroek, 2010). Operating under American "accreditation and sponsorship" (Altbach, 2004, p. 9), the American University of Beirut is one of the institutions which requires the SAT as part of its entrance exams. Hence, the race for excellence in Lebanon remains outside the reach and control of the public sector and is mainly manifested in private higher education institutions.

The research evidence for the impact of globalisation on education, and in particular higher education, in Lebanon has not been entirely positive. The NHDR for the years 2001-2002 and 2008-2009 elaborates on some of these shortcomings. According to the 2001-2002 NHDR, quality higher education in Lebanon is not accessible to all. Likewise, the 2008-2009 NHDR described the Lebanese educational system as a "dual system" in which the middle and upper classes seek private education and the lower classes seek public education (p. 130). In addition, the Lebanese University has been weakened by sectarian interference (NHDR, 2008-2009). Some of the other challenges to higher education in Lebanon include "the scarcity of resources and the weak linkage between research centers, government, the private sector, and the general public …" (NHDR, 2001-2002, p. 23). Globalisation in Lebanon thus seems to have widened the gap between the private and public sectors.

In light of the challenges caused by globalisation in the Arab world and Lebanon, some authors have made a number of suggestions. For instance, Galal and Kanaan (2011) considered that in light of globalisation, Arab countries must update and enhance their higher education systems by addressing issues pertaining to "funding" and "quality" (p. 8). Likewise, the NHDR report for 2001-2002 considered that "Efforts must also be enhanced to develop the educational system so that it serves the objective of social integration in the context of globalization" (p. 23).

3.6 Theoretical Framework

The research into the internationalisation of higher education institutions reviewed in the previous sections indicates a divergence in the impacts of 'globalisation' on tertiary education. There has been a worldwide growth in competition for places in tertiary study. This has led to the development and growth of admissions testing and English language proficiency testing. The first section reviewed the research into these tests with a particular focus on Lebanon and the Arab world. The second section examined the research into the social impact and role of testing – why tests were selected and adopted, the responsibilities of

test developers and test users, and the ways in which testing interrelates to social and economic changes. The final section reviewed research on the internationalisation and globalisation in tertiary education with a particular focus on Lebanon and the Arab world.

How can we best make sense of these global changes and their differential impact on local contexts? How can the differences between internationalisation and globalisation be accounted for? This study draws on one main source: the work of Bourdieu (1979, 1990, 1991).

At the same time, Lebanese elites and elite universities are joining the global network, other institutions and groups in Lebanon are becoming marginalised and fragmented. At the local level there is more entrenched division between groups and sub-groups in terms of access to the global flows. These two complementary forces have the impact of undermining national sovereignty and the importance of national government policy and programs. The work of Boudieu is particularly relevant for this study of the context in Lebanon where the national government has traditionally been a fragile coalition of competing against internal and external forces.

3.6.1 Theories of Practice and the Reproduction of Inequality

From Bourdieu the study takes notions of social, cultural and symbolic capital: For example, the value attributed to English and knowledge gained in English as compared with French and Arabic; the values attributed to learning gained from government, private and coaching colleges or from overseas study. This is also a dynamic process whereby social networks and institutions produce and reproduce inequality. For example, in one of his hypothetical theories (1986) he argues that economic capital can be transformed into cultural capital; conversely, lack of economic capital affects the acquisition of cultural capital useful in school and in later life.

Economic, educational, social and cultural capital are all learned cultural competencies and knowledges. And so it is said that when you learn any language or even a musical instrument, you invest in cultural capital. Moreover, Bourdieu looked at the connection between culture and social stratification and power, and challenged the idea that education systems are meritocratic. He saw them as involved in the reproduction of class and inequality (Jaeger & Breen, 2012). He saw universities in particular as channelling or distributing cultural capital

and of course it is the wealthy who have primary access to universities, so universities are complicit in this process of producing and reproducing privilege.

This study helped forge Bourdieu's theory of practice and informed his entire intellectual trajectory, including both academic endeavours and his later political critique of neo-liberalism. Near the end of his life, he wrote:

> As I was able to observe in Algeria, the unification of the economic field tends, especially through monetary unification and the generalization of monetary exchanges that follow, to hurl all social agents into an economic game for which they are not equally prepared and equipped, culturally and economically. It tends by the same token to submit them to standards objectively imposed by competition from more efficient productive forces and modes of production, as can readily be seen with small rural producers who are more and more completely torn away from self –sufficiency. In short, ***unification benefits the dominant***. (Bourdieu, 2003, p. 93)

Bourdieu's engagement with "the social" was not simply a theoretical position but the product of an acute interest in social inequality and the ways in which it is masked and perpetuated. In one of his accounts, Bourdieu points to his dismay at the 'opening up' of the French educational system during the post-war period (*les trente glorieuses*) because it failed to deliver a genuinely egalitarian society but instead reproduced inequalities in new forms (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 1979). The national education system stood as perhaps the supreme exemplar of the pretended seamless unity and neutrality of the state in simultaneous roles as representative of the nation and embodiment of reason and progress. Bourdieu showed not merely that it was biased but that it was biased in principle.

Therefore, the concept of capitalisation and how the social and cultural capital of students from different backgrounds is valued or marginalised is something which is central to this study.

The next chapter outlines the ways in which these issues are explored in the methodological approach and selection of research strategies for the study.

Chapter Four – Methodology and Research Design

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research approach taken to and design of this study into the impact of globalisation and entrance requirements for tertiary study in Lebanon with the adoption of American university entrance tests and international language tests. The research questions which developed from this issue and my reading of the current research literature discussed in Chapter 3 were as follows:

What are the implications of the changing tertiary entry requirements in Lebanon for student access, school curriculum and key stakeholders?

- *What are the differences and similarities in perceptions of tertiary administrators and curriculum developers of the changing entry requirements and the responsibilities in preparing for these?*
- *How do students at American-style universities perceive the challenges of the language-based entry tests and role and responsibilities of schools in preparing for these examinations?*
- *How do secondary students perceive and experience the issues of tertiary entry tests?*
- *In what ways do secondary teachers and executive respond to and accommodate the changing language requirements of American-style universities?*

4.2 Research Approach

Specific approaches to research are determined by the social research problems being investigated (Cresswell, 2013). The secondary and tertiary educational systems in Lebanon are complex. Although Lebanon is a small country and the examination process is highly centralised the mix of government and private sectors complicates the picture. The GSC is a high-stakes examination for students, schools and parents mainly because it functions as a university entrance qualification, albeit in tandem with additional, mostly language proficiency tests for private universities as well as mathematics tests for those that are required to take the SAT. The requirements for university entry into private American-style universities in Lebanon are also changing rapidly with the growing importance of American style universities and more recently, it has become common for students whose education was gained in French medium contexts at high school to opt for American universities, rather

than French models. This phenomenon has led to the opening of an increasingly growing number of American style universities to meet this demand.

For these reasons aggregated data from quantitative research would not do justice to the complexity and dynamic nature of the Lebanese educational context which is best captured by a qualitative, in-depth study to explore the impact of and reasons for the changes drawing on the range of stakeholder perspectives. The current study adopts a qualitative method as it entails a case study of one private school and focuses on an interpretive, naturalistic approach which is appropriate for a study in which the researcher as an insider sets out to explore how students and teachers alike are affected by the changing requirements for university entry into private American universities in Lebanon. Such an approach captures the meanings that individuals construct deriving from the various interactions of social associations and activities, which are in a constant state of interpretation. Being an insider gives significant insight into students' and teachers' concerns alike as I was their teacher and colleague respectively and this in turn allowed them to share feelings and thoughts openly and speak more freely. It was through these social acts, whether individual or collective, that I was able to analyse the complexity of this specific context in Lebanon.

4.2.1 Qualitative Methods and Tools Employed

Rooted in anthropology, sociology and philosophy, qualitative research methodology now is widely accepted and used in almost all fields of social science inquiry, including education and applied linguistics (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, 2011; Croker, 2009).

In qualitative research the researchers explore the meaning as understood by the participants in a natural setting. The qualitative researchers also seek understanding of the phenomenon or process as shaped by the meanings people bring to them by employing different methods such as interviews, surveys, observation and focus groups (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Wiersma and Jurs (2009) clarify qualitative research further:

> It is the perceptions of those being studied that are important, and, to the extent possible, these perceptions are to be captured in order to obtain an accurate 'measure' of reality. 'Meaning' is as perceived or experienced by those being studied; it is not imposed by the researcher. (pp. 232-233)

Bryman (2012) also points out that epistemologically, qualitative researchers take an interpretivist position, which emphasises "the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants" (p. 380). This study investigates how students and teachers alike are affected by the changing requirements for university entry into private American universities in Lebanon. In-depth understanding of the phenomenon would be achieved by representing and interpreting the meaning brought about by the participants in their natural settings. To answer questions rooted in this context, contextualised perspectives and naturalistic approaches are necessary. In suggesting alternative conceptions of the nature of research, Nunan (1996) states: "Truth is a negotiable commodity contingent upon the historical context within which phenomena are observed and interpreted" (pp. xi-xiii). Based on such a conception, Nunan strongly argues for "qualitative and interpretive studies of teaching and learning", which he thinks are lacking in the field of second language education (Nunan, 1996). It is the aim of this study to capture this contextualised truth about the changing requirements for entry into American universities in Lebanon and the impact they have had on the stakeholders. By its nature, qualitative methods are most suitable for capturing the depth, richness, complexity and relationships related to educational phenomena, especially language teaching in their specific context (Richards, 2003). This study explores international standardised tests such as SAT/TOEFL exams and their impact on secondary students, teachers and other stakeholders, and raises questions about the current education system in Lebanon. Therefore, a holistic qualitative approach is most suitable to represent and interpret such complex interactions. It offers a chance of reflecting multiple perspectives of both the teachers and the students, as well as the other stakeholders.

Teacher and student interviews as well as open-ended questions in the survey questionnaires were used for collecting qualitative data. Before presenting the data collection and analysis procedures in the next section, I briefly outline the process of selecting and developing the instruments for conducting the study. Interviews are widely used in qualitative research as a tool to help researchers find out about feelings, attitudes, perceptions and intentions which are not directly observable. They provide an opportunity for the researcher "to enter into the other person's perspective" (Patton, 2002). A well-designed and successfully conducted interview can collect in-depth and illuminating data that capture the participants' perspectives. However, conducting an interview is a challenging undertaking. As Patton (2002) states: "The quality of the information obtained during an interview is largely dependent on the interviewer" (p. 341). Therefore, it is important for the interviewer to take

measures before and during the interview to ensure high-quality information be obtained. In this study, I followed the guidelines of enhancing the quality of interview data proposed by Patton (2002) in preparing the interview guide and conducting the interviews. I began composing questions relevant for collecting effective data (see Appendix 1). In conducting the interviews, the interview guide served to prioritise the important issues in question; however, I also tried to adopt an open and supportive attitude so that participants would be more likely to bring out their understanding and viewpoints. I also tried to build a conversation by asking some follow-up questions to explore and probe a given topic further when appropriate. Meanwhile, I paid special attention to holding back my own perspectives to reduce interviewer bias. The process of preparing for interviews was done with my supervisor and was an integral part of separating my roles as teacher/colleague and as researcher in the school. Table 4.1 presents a sample of the types of questions I used in the interviews.

Table 4.1: Sample of questions used in interviews

Guidelines by Patton (2002, pp. 348-380)	Examples from the teacher and student interviews of this study
Start the interview by asking non-controversial questions which invite straightforward descriptions, requires minimum recall and interpretation.	Ask the teachers to present personal information about their experience and the subject and class level they are teaching. Ask the students about the stream/ track they've chosen and how they perceive the English learnt at this level.
Ask questions about opinions and feelings to build on and probe for interpretations of the experience.	Purpose of the implementation of such syllabus and official exams; general views on language education; general views on learning language catered for official exams and SAT, e.g.
Ask genuinely open-ended, neutral questions to minimize the imposition of predetermined responses.	What is, in your opinion, an effective English curriculum at this phase of schooling? What is your general view of learning language that serves a limited need?
Using prefatory statements and announcements to alert the interviewee to the nature of the question, direct their awareness, focus their attention and to allow them to organize their thoughts.	Now we'll look at some general questions… The next question is related to pedagogy.
Using probes and follow-up questions (Dörnyei, 2007; Patton, 2002) to deepen the response to a question and increase the richness and depth of responses.	Could you elaborate on that? This is an interesting point, could you give more You mentioned "...", what do you mean by that?

In qualitative research, the researchers believe in the existence of multiple truths. The participants' understanding, values, beliefs, reasons and subjective beliefs all contribute towards knowledge generation. The process of knowledge construction is the focus and not just how knowledge is generated or whether the knowledge is constructed or not. For me in this process, it meant articulating and questioning my own perceptions of an interpretation of the 'truth' so that I could therefore get closer to participants' versions of these 'truths'. The qualitative research paradigm believes in inductive reasoning and seeks to understand multiple realities. Mental, social and cultural phenomena are examined by qualitative

researchers to construct meaning, for example, studying the perceptions of small town school teachers and students to understand the factors impacting on the teachers' job due to the changes in entry admission at American universities in Lebanon. In addition to the interviews conducted, participants (students) in the research were invited to complete a survey (see Appendix 2). This tool, along with field notes and research diary, were also ways to 'triangulate' findings and strengthen my role as insider and researcher. The interpretivist paradigm, which is the basis for qualitative research, believes in multiple truths and seeks to explain the construction of knowledge and not just whether the knowledge is constructed or not. In qualitative research, the researchers cannot detach themselves from the researched phenomenon as they bring in their subjective experiences but the process of selecting and developing research instruments can lead to greater trustworthiness in the findings and conclusions.

4.2.2 Research Questions

This section outlines the relationship of the research tools to the research questions.

What are the implications of the changing tertiary entry requirements in Lebanon for student access, school curriculum, and key stakeholders?

- *What are the differences and similarities in perceptions of tertiary administrators and curriculum developers of the changing entry requirements and the responsibilities in preparing for these?*
- *How do students at American-style universities perceive the challenges of the language-based entry tests and role and responsibilities of schools in preparing for these examinations?*
- *How do secondary students perceive and experience the issues of tertiary entry tests?*
- *In what ways do secondary teachers and executives respond to and accommodate the changing language requirements of American-style universities?*

Table 4.2: Research questions, data collection methods and data analysis

Research Questions	Data Collection	Data Analysis
Global Question **What are the implications of the changing tertiary entry requirements in Lebanon for student access, school curriculum and key stakeholders?**	Interviews with 2 curriculum designers, 2 teachers and 21 students. Collection of copies of the English secondary syllabus from CERD (Center of Education and Research Development) and the research site school.	Coding and analysis of data; identification of emergent themes and patterns.
RQ 1- What are the differences and similarities in perceptions of the tertiary administrators and curriculum developers of the changing entry requirements and responsibilities in preparing for these?	Interviews with 3 university administrative staff and 2 other personnel from CERD. Collection of documents about exam procedures and other policies	Documents were analysed and categorised. They were then organised into appropriate themes.
RQ 2- How do students of American-style universities perceive the challenges the language-based entry tests and role and responsibilities of schools in preparing for these examinations?	Semi-structured interviews and email correspondence with students across different majors from AUB, LAU and HCU	Analysed findings and documented data into selected themes pinpointing shared experiences and reflections
RQ3- How do secondary students perceive and experience the issues of tertiary entry tests?	Transferred words spoken by participants eliciting patterns and perspectives recorded in researcher's diary Semi-structured interviews with students.	Recorded their responses and categorized the findings into shared experiences and reflections.
RQ 4- In what ways do secondary teachers and executive respond to and accommodate the changing language requirements of American universities?	An in-depth case study of one Anglophone private school. Interviews with two senior English teachers, the coordinator, and school administrator (principal).	Triangulation of the data collected from the two research tools to extract responses that showed consistency. Then made interpretation linking the responses to the already formulated themes.

4.2.3 Research Sites and Institutions

4.2.3.1 Castle High School

Castle High School (CHS), a pseudonym, is an average size, co-educational private school comprising 870 students from kindergarten to year 12. As discussed in Chapter 2, the school system in Lebanon is complex and private schools like CHS are free to determine their own teaching methodology, classroom organisation and textbook usage. Although private schools have greater autonomy than public schools, teachers must teach within the broad requirements of the established curriculum and their students sit the national examinations. CHS is a private secular school and is supported financially by student fees. It has four levels: kindergarten, primary, middle school and secondary. The average ratio of girls to boys is 3:5 although this may vary slightly across class levels. In the secondary Humanities classes the ratio of girls to boys is 4:1 as most boys at this level choose the sciences stream because they report that it will present better opportunities and wider choices at university.

The students are predominantly of Muslim background, almost equally divided into Sunni and Shi'a with Druze comprising 10%, but only 13 Christian-background students. It is a prestigious school founded in 1987, situated in Sidon, the main city of south Lebanon. The school prospectus states that it implements the practice of mixed ability groups and seeks to prepare students for the two external examinations: the Brevet in Year 9, and the Lebanese Baccalaureate in Year 12. The school prepares students for the Brevet examinations, covering all academic subjects. The language policy of CHS is that it uses English as its medium for instruction and French is taught as a second foreign language. Some 'non-academic' subjects, such as Technology and PE, are not examined. Students who fail either the Brevet or the Baccalaureate on the first sitting may attempt the exam again during the long summer break only if they attain an average score of 8/20.

There is no official, public examination between years 9 and 12 and the school sets internal promotion criteria from year 10 to 11 in line with other private schools. The school offers the terminating secondary government exam (the Lebanese Baccalaureate), which is equivalent to the New South Wales (Australia) HSC, in the last year of secondary schooling.

Although the school implements the Lebanese content-based curriculum for English language teaching, its middle school programme (apart from Brevet) and secondary classes Year 10 and Year 11 opt for a curriculum based more on American literature.

CHS offers the three main streams at Year 12: Humanities, Life Sciences (LS) and General Science (GS). University entry is determined by student results achieved in the official examination along with school results obtained in grades 10 and 11 which are also taken into consideration.

If students belong to the science track, then they are more likely to undertake a major in engineering, medicine, health sciences and other science-related study at university. Students who take the Humanities track would more likely opt for a major such as business, education or political studies.

All students, irrespective of their chosen track, are required to take English as one of their school subjects. The LS and GS classes are allocated one period of English a week and the Humanities class is assigned six periods of English a week. The English course undertaken by Humanities students is not the same as that undertaken by the science-intensive streams. It is a more literature-oriented course with a wider range of themes to explore.

Upon completion of secondary schooling and after receiving scores obtained on the various entrance exams at the different universities, most students go on to tertiary study. Very few consider the Military Academy as an option (often only boys) for which the Baccalaureate exam (GSC) is a requirement for entry.

The majority of students at CHS seek admission to private American-style universities and, if financially well-off, tend to have AUB and LAU as their priority. Others may look at BAU and HCU as alternatives and the very few who seek to major in Law may enter the Lebanese University, considered the top university for this major.

Although it is difficult to argue for the 'representativeness' of any school in the Lebanese context, Castle High would be considered a fairly typical secular secondary school in that it is not exclusive in terms of sectarian affiliation or of cost, and its placement in Sidon means that the majority of its students are Muslims.

In Lebanon fewer than half of the children attend public schools with about 20% attending 'mid-private' schools, which are essentially private schools offering reduced fees especially to needy students, the shortfall being made up by direct fiscal support from private philanthropic bodies.

Private schools, as a group, are remarkably heterogeneous, ranging from exclusively Francophone schools offering the French Baccalauréat, through dual Anglophone/ Francophone schools offering the International Baccalaureate to exclusively Anglophone schools offering American-style high schooling (all schools must, at the same time, offer the Lebanese Baccalaureate unless they cater exclusively for students of foreign nationality).

4.2.3.2 Centre for Education and Research Development (CERD)

CERD is part of the Ministry of Education of Lebanon and is responsible for developing curricula for both public and private schools. It also runs in-service training for teachers at public schools. Although private schools in Lebanon have the liberty of designing and carrying out their own syllabus, it is mandatory that they prepare their students for government exams at Brevet and the terminal (GSC) classes. Because of this, private schools generally have parallel curricula in place only at those two crucial exiting levels.

4.2.3.3 University context

The three universities that were chosen for this study were the American University of Beirut (AUB), the Lebanese American University (LAU) and the Hariri Canadian University (HCU) now Hariri University (HU) as they have all adopted similar university entrance procedures for High School exiting students and were the main destinations for secondary students at CHS. Although these universities are not representative of the Lebanese tertiary system, they were the main goals of students graduating from CHS and it is these universities which have the greatest impact on the Lebanese tertiary system.

Admission decisions are made on completed applications based primarily on the students' academic record (school grades) covering grade 10 and 11 and SAT results. Each university prior to registration requires students to demonstrate a level of English proficiency consistent with the demands of a programme carried out almost exclusively in the English language. This is normally done during the students' final year at high school and no later than August of that last year if they are to gain entry for the fall semester and may be done in any of the following ways:

- SAT 1 (writing section) with a score of no less than 380
- iBT (Internet-based TOEFL) with a score of no less than 80
- EEE – English Entrance Exam (designed by AUB and LAU universities) with a score of no less than 500

4.2.4 Research Participants

The main stakeholder group in this study were students (both present and past) and their families. It is the students whose access to or exclusion from tertiary study is determined by the changing requirements. The teachers, the English coordinator, school principal, educational experts and tertiary recruiting officers were seen as representing the other stakeholders. Research site and all participants have been given pseudonyms to protect their identity.

The focus of the case study was on the students at Castle High School and on their experiences and perceptions of the changing tertiary entry requirements. The study involved a questionnaire survey of 50 students from year 12 and individual interviews with 21 students from year 12 (all three tracks LS, GS and Humanities). In addition, two English teachers, a coordinator and the school principal were interviewed. At the three universities, six ex-students were interviewed along with the three key tertiary admissions officers. At CERD interviews were conducted with two curriculum and examination developers. It was through the students that information was gained on families and it was beyond the scope of this study to approach parents directly.

The researcher has been a teacher at the school for more than fifteen years and is known to all participants. The first approach was to the principal to discuss the project and gain permission to interview and survey students and teachers. The approach to members of staff and students was through the school so that there would be no element of coercion or imposition on staff and students to participate. The invitation to participate was primarily coordinated through the principal and the Head of English at the school. All participants signed and returned consent forms. Ethics approval was gained from the Australian tertiary HREC committee and the approved information and consent forms were used in Lebanon. There were no requirements for institutional ethics approval at secondary or tertiary institutions in Lebanon.

4.2.4.1 School teachers / coordinator / principal

Both teachers and the Head teacher involved in senior English curriculum were interviewed for this study. The two senior English teachers chosen for this study were colleagues Meg and Bianca.

Meg holds a BA in Political Science and Public Administration and a TD in TEFL from the AUB. She is a secondary teacher of English Language and Literature and a teacher of English

Language at local colleges. She has taught English as a first foreign language at a private school and as a second foreign language at various colleges, and has been teaching at CHS for seventeen years. She was raised in Australia and did her primary and high schooling in Melbourne, Victoria.

Bianca holds a BA in English Literature and a TD in TEFL (Secondary Level) from the AUB. She began as an English teacher of grade 5 at the National Evangelical School in Sidon in 1997. She then moved to CHS in 1998 on a part-time basis from 1998-2002, but was later appointed as a full-time English Language and Literature teacher to both middle school and secondary classes. Since 2004, she has been teaching English to junior and senior students and has gained extensive experience via the many local and international conferences and workshops she has attended.

Kamal, the Head of English, is currently teaching the 3rd secondary classes (the LS and GS streams) and oversees the English programme in both primary and secondary levels at CHS. He is a member of the official examination committee at the Ministry of Education and has been involved in education for more than 30 years.

Nancy, the principal, holds a BSc in Chemistry from BUC, currently known as LAU. She taught Chemistry and Maths at the National Evangelical School of Sidon for 30 years. She was appointed as principal of CHS in 1987 and has held this position ever since. She aspires to have international affiliations with private schools in the UK and aims to make classroom instruction computer-based if funding for this project is provided.

Teachers and head teacher were interviewed about their perspectives and perceptions of the current syllabus in order to understand the influences shaping the teaching and learning and the alignment with post-secondary school needs, such as the preparation for university language test requirements. All compulsory English classes at secondary level are supervised and coordinated by the head of the English Department at school.

4.2.4.2 School students

4.2.4.2.1 Surveys

Two months into the academic year 2008-2009 around the third week of November, the researcher wanted to gather data about the different learning needs and tertiary institute choices anticipated by senior students at the school. Fifty students enrolled in the science

tracks of the year 12 classes were given a five to seven minute questionnaire to complete after being approved by the head of English and administration office at school. The teachers of the class explained to their students the motive and purpose of the questionnaire and explained that their responses would be confidential and anonymous.

4.2.4.2.2 Student interviews

Interviews were conducted with students whose target was entry into American-style private universities upon their completion of the 3rd secondary academic year. The students were invited to participate by the head teacher who explained the project to them. The participants were representative of all three tracks: Humanities, LS and GS. All 21 students were aged either 16 or turning 17. Of the 21 students interviewed 9 were male and 12 were female. In order to get the different perspectives, selectivity involved both pre-test takers and post-test takers, with the students being interviewed twice. The first time was to gain insight into their perceptions and concerns about the whole process of the test taking and preparation experience and the second time toward the end of the academic year was to learn more about each individual's outcome. The re-interviews ran for approximately five minutes and were mainly aimed at gaining data related to the outcomes of the test-taking experience. The interviewees were all in 3rd secondary classes and some had already experienced the test taking experience while others were yet to take the exam. The researcher gathered this information through a short questionnaire that was given to all 3rd secondary students before the selectivity process. It was handed to them by their teachers during the fourth week of the academic year after being approved by the head of English at school.

Tables 4.3 and 4.4 give brief details of participants.

Table 4.3: Data for each student participant

Student	Stream	Age	Gender	Level of English	Preferred University	Expected Major
S01-HU	Humanities Pre- test	16	female	Intermediate	HCU	Business Studies
S02-HU	Humanities Pre-test	17	female	Upper Intermediate	LAU	Interior Design
S03-HU	Humanities Pre-test	17	female	Advanced	AUB	English Literature
S04-HU	Humanities Pre-test	17	male	Intermediate	LAU	Business Studies
S05-LS	L. Sciences Pre-test	16	male	Intermediate	AUB	Engineering
S06-LS	L. Sciences Pre-test	16	male	Upper Intermediate	AUB	Medicine
S07-LS	L. Sciences Pre-test	16	female	Upper Intermediate	HCU	Biochemistry
S08-LS	L. Sciences Pre-test	17	female	Advanced	AUB	Medicine
S09-GS	G. Sciences Pre-test	17	male	Intermediate	AUB	Physics
S10-GS	G. Sciences Pre-test	16	male	Intermediate	LAU	Engineering
S11-GS	G. Sciences Pre-test	17	female	Upper Intermediate	AUB	Engineering
S12-HU	Humanities Post-test	16	female	Upper Intermediate	AUB	Eng Lit
S13-HU	Humanities Post-test	17	male	Intermediate	LAU	Business Studies
S14-HU	Humanities Post-test	16	female	Upper Intermediate	HCU	Interior Design
S15-LS	L. Sciences Post-test	17	male	Upper Intermediate	AUB	Biology
S16-LS	L. Sciences Post-test	16	female	Advanced	HCU	Computer Communication Engineering
S17-LS	L. Sciences Post-test	17	male	Intermediate	HCU	Business Management
S18-GS	G. Sciences Post-test	16	female	Upper Intermediate	LAU	
S19-GS	G. Sciences Post-test	17	female	Upper Intermediate	AUB	Environmental Health
S20-GS	G. Sciences Post-test	16	Male	Intermediate	AUB	Physics
S21-GS	G. Sciences Post-test	17	Male	Intermediate	AUB	Mechanical Engineering

4.2.4.3 University students

Six university students who were attending the three targeted tertiary institutions were emailed and given details about the study in order to conduct interviews. After gaining approval by each through email replies, appointments were made with two each of the same

university. Interviews were conducted either in a quiet place on the campus of the university or in a cafe. Table 4.4 gives further details about each student.

Table 4.4: Relevant data on each of the university students who participated in the research

Student	Age	Gender	Level of English	University	Major
S22-UN	21	Male	Advanced	AUB	Medicine
S23-UN	20	Female	Advanced	HCU	Business Management
S24-UN	19	Male	Upper Intermediate	AUB	Mechanical Engineering
S25-UN	19	Female	Upper Intermediate	LAU	Interior Design
S26-UN	20	Female	Advanced	LAU	Early Childhood Education
S27-UN	20	Male	Upper Intermediate	HCU	Computer Communication Engineering

4.2.4.4 University administrators

Mohanad, the admission officer at AUB, has been in the post for more than nine years and was conversant with the criteria used for admitting students into the different majors at undergraduate level.

Carmen, the admission officer at LAU, has been in this post for more than twenty years and was equally familiar with issues relating to undergraduate entry into LAU.

Liza, the third admission officer from HCU, has been in this post for six years and had insight about many of the prospective students entering tertiary study since many of them came from Sidon.

4.2.4.5 Curriculum designers / developers

Salma, the Head of the English Department at CERD, holds a BA and TD from the AUB and has been in this position for approximately 27 years. She has been a member of the official exam committee since 1991 and has direct regular contact with the Minister of Education. She is responsible for organising in-service training for English teachers in the public sector and joint projects with NGOs across the nation. She coordinates and oversees the work of the national textbook project and the work of curriculum designers of the English subject at the centre.

Paul, the curriculum developer, holds a Masters in Education from Cambridge University. He is the chairperson of the English Department at LIU(Lebanese International University) and head of the English program at a prestigious private school in Beirut. He has been a member of the English official exam committee since 1994 and runs in-service training for teachers at

public and private schools in Lebanon. He has extensive experience in teacher-training and took part in designing the national English text books for grades 10 and 11.

4.3 Data Collection

4.3.1 Document Collection

- Data were collected through document analysis of tests, textbooks, syllabi, policy documents, admission flyers and catalogues, and other pertinent documentation that was deemed appropriate for this study and revealed to what extent an alignment between the two exams mentioned above pertained.
- Document collection comprised various documents including the school syllabus from CHS, admission requirements from the universities mentioned above in the form of hard and soft copy catalogues and results on SAT/TOEFL and official exams. Moreover, policy documents and the complete plan for educational reform in Lebanon presented in an MoE booklet, *A Plan for Educational Reform in Lebanon* was collected. The booklet is intended for members of the MoE and teachers mainly, though parents may request a copy from CERD. Each document collected, either in hard or soft copy, was needed to make connections to the different perspectives and systems in place. The value of this information is not to judge the school or university system, but to merely identify from which educational philosophy each system emanates and how each correlates with students and teachers alike in achieving the different educational learning goals.
- Documents that outlined the required syllabus set by the Ministry of Education for all schools to implement and university admission flyers all helped shape a better understanding of the various goals each of the participants had.
- Collection of relevant booklets and policies from universities and the Ministry of Education gave insight into the various policies and regulations for each institution.
- Student scores on SAT/TOEFL exams and 3nd secondary official exam results in English showed the correlation between the results achieved on each.
- Student emails shared informal information through correspondence which was established upon initiating this study.
- The document collection served to inform interviews and later stages of the research.

4.3.2 University Administration Interviews

During the academic year 2008-09, I arranged to meet with admissions officers from AUB, LAU and HCU. The aim of these interviews was to gain insight into how admission decisions are made at each institute and to identify what similarities or differences there were between them.

Mohanad, the admissions officer at AUB, was called by phone and an appointment was arranged to conduct an interview. In February 2009 I met with him and recorded a 25 minute interview that was held in his office at College Hall on the AUB campus. Prior to the interview, he was given explicit details about the study and a consent form for him to sign. He was cooperative and comfortable about the study and stated that he found merit in the issues raised. He even showed willingness to have further contact via email or phone if the need arose.

At LAU, I first called up the switchboard that put me through to the admissions officer in charge, Carmen. Once she learnt about my reasons for wanting to meet with her, a meeting was arranged for the following week to be held at her office at LAU. Similarly, explicit details were given to the officer and a consent form was signed prior to the interview that lasted approximately 20 minutes. She too was cooperative and comfortable with the meeting we had and showed interest in the study by remaining open to any further contact likely to happen.

Liza, the third admission officer contacted, was from HCU. She was contacted over the phone and was from the same city I lived in. We met at a café in Sidon and had a very informal discussion in which I just took notes as we spoke about the study. Because HCU is located approximately 24 km north of Sidon, many prospective students exiting from private schools in that area choose HCU as a priority. Other factors that make HCU attractive to students are that its fees are considerably lower than those of either AUB or LAU and the fact that it has a well-developed business school.

The interviews were conducted in English for the most part, but occasional Arabic and French were used as well because switching language depending on the topic of conversation is part of Lebanese culture. It is very common for the educated Lebanese to know two foreign languages and customary to use the three in a conversation. For example, hi, kifak cava? which is a common greeting used by many Lebanese and this can be applicable to other

phrases as well. Interviews were audio-recorded and notes were written down on a pad for later analysis.

4.3.3 Interviews with Curriculum Developers

Interviews were conducted with the curriculum developers at the CERD. Salma was with the head of English programmes at CERD and Paul was with a member of the exam committee for the third secondary official exams, responsible for the English subject in all three streams. Both have extensive experience in their field and willingly arranged for me to meet with them in their designated offices at the CERD headquarters on the outskirts of Beirut. The aim of these interviews was to learn more about the secondary curriculum in place and why private schools had to adhere to it if many of them aspired private universities that do not really place much emphasis on the results obtained in the national external exams.

The meetings were recorded, taking on a semi-structured interview style. They lasted for approximately 15 minutes each and we spoke more informally at length after the interviews. Notes were taken and policy documents were photocopied and handed to me for further reading. I was even presented with the complete plan for educational reform in Lebanon that had been prepared by CERD. The interviews were audio-recorded in English and most of the conversations were conducted in English as well, even the informal chats we had either before or after the 15 minute recorded conversations.

4.3.4 Student Survey

A survey was conducted among students in the third secondary classes (Year 12 – all three tracks). This was done after the principal's approval was gained and then explained to the students by their class teachers. Information sheets and surveys were distributed to students to be completed in class. Completion and return of survey was counted as consent. The survey consisted of questions about students' learning needs in English and how well the current curriculum caters for these needs. A total of 50 students from the three different tracks completed the survey. Forty students belonged to the science track and ten to the Humanities track as this was the total number of students representing the third secondary classes in their different tracks at the time. The survey was written in English because the school uses English as a medium of instruction and all students were of a level of proficiency to understand the survey. They were also accustomed to filling out questionnaires and surveys run by the school and visiting NGOs in English. On the survey form, the students

were given the option of agreeing to being interviewed later. The survey was conducted prior to the student interviews in order to assess whether students felt that their learner needs were being met. The students reported taking on average 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

4.3.5 Student Interviews

Students were asked in surveys if they would agree to being interviewed. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews over a period of two academic semesters, spanning one academic year (October 2008 – June 2009). The dates varied as eleven students were interviewed prior to the SAT exam experience and ten after doing the test. Questions were about the participants' experiences, motivations and issues in preparing for both the Baccalaureate and SAT/TOEFL exams, attitudes towards context on each of the tests, involvement in training for students and teachers alike, past experiences and the impact these tests have had on either their learning or teaching depending on the interviewees. Interviews were approximately 20-30 minutes long and were audio-recorded. Then all 21 students were re-interviewed toward the end of the academic year to gather data about the whole testing process and its outcome. This time interviews were shorter (approximately three to five minutes), they were audio-recorded and more focused on the test experience and its outcome for each individual. All interviews with the students were conducted on the school premises in the English Lounge or in empty classrooms.

For the recordings I used a modern Olympus digital recorder and no problems were encountered with the recordings. They were saved as mp3 files and uploaded to my computer for safe storage, with additional copies burnt to compact disc.

All interviews were transcribed with key episodes noted separately. The transcripts of each interview were saved as a Microsoft Word file as well, with copies being stored in a dedicated file for the analysis phase of the study.

The first interviews with students were conducted in English over a period of 90 days as this was the time allocated between the pre-tests and post-tests for the academic year. Most students are encouraged to always speak in English with their English teachers at school and more often than not it is common to observe them doing the same among each other. This is a school that thrives on its achievements in the English subject and many parents choose to enrol their children because of its strong English program. Hence both students and staff are encouraged to speak in English. The principal and teachers were approached towards the end

of the same academic year. The researcher did this so that he could receive feedback from the students who took the standardised tests, which were scheduled at different times throughout the year. The aim was to get the students' input so as to use this data when interviewing staff. English was the only language permitted when students were addressing English teachers or any other teacher whose subject uses English as a medium of instruction. Naturally some students resorted to Arabic when they fell short of the term to convey a specific meaning, but this was encountered mainly with less competent learners of the foreign language or those who were less serious about adhering to school rules.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted during the academic year 2008-09 with a total number of 21 students, all from CHS. Initially 11 students were interviewed prior to taking the SAT/TOEFL exams during the school year and were labelled as pre-test students. Four were from the Humanities stream, three females and one male. Four students from the LS stream were divided into two males and two females. Lastly, the students from the GS stream were two males and one female, totalling 11 students. All the participants were either 16 or 17 years of age and in their last year of High school.

The researcher also conducted interviews with 10 other participants after taking one of the university entrance exams such as the TOEFL/SAT/EEE and labelled them post-test students. These interviews comprised three students from Humanities, three from LS and four from the GS class. This balanced out equally in terms of number of participants and their backgrounds according to their prospective study at university. The re-interviews were conducted towards the end of the academic year between the end of May and mid June of 2009.

4.3.6 Teacher / Principal and Other Interviews

Teacher interviews were conducted in the English staff room at a convenient time agreed upon by both parties and were approximately 20 minutes long. Prior to the interviews, consent forms were read through together explicitly highlighting the purpose of the study, and then approval was granted by participants by signing the forms. The researcher and participants were comfortable and sensed a non-threatening atmosphere during the interviews. This was a result of my being able to demonstrate a relationship based on trust and mutuality. Interviews were conducted in English as the faculty was accustomed to and encouraged by superiors to communicate in English. Both teachers, the head of English and the principal were fluent and considered English to be their stronger language. In addition to the interviews we often had discussions about the study in the staff room, in the playground

and at social gatherings which stimulated ideas. These were recorded on a notepad that I regularly carried around with me and jotted interesting points that arose from the informal discussions. Even with the informal discussions consent was granted verbally prior to any discussion. The authenticity of qualitative methodology lies in the long term on-site immersion in the data collection field (Glesne & Peskin, 1992). This allowed understanding of how participants constructed their knowledge and their social relations. This type of research can be seen through the researcher's subjectivity which carries with it skills, knowledge and understandings that add to the meaning of the research. Bruner (1996, p. 130) says that "…neither the empiricist's tested knowledge nor the rationalist's self-evident truths describe the ground on which ordinary people go about making sense of their experiences."

Informal discussions were based on the occasional chats with students about their future career, major and university choices as these topics were deeply rooted in the culture and it was more or less a teacher's duty to express interest in these matters by inquiring and eliciting details. A typical conversation by any member of staff with a senior student would more than often be about future studies and career. What makes my chats a little different is perhaps it served more than one purpose. The researcher sought to gain insight into the motives behind students' choices and learn more about how they perceive the transition from secondary to tertiary education. All informal interactions with students from the beginning of the research period were written as notes by researcher into his notepad. No specific names or quotes from individual students were recorded. Students had signed consent forms for data from informal chats being used. It is very unlikely that participants experienced any risks in the investigation such as being expelled from their school or questioned by higher authorities. Time and effort are the main contributions that participants have made. Their participation was voluntary and they could have withdrawn from the investigation at any time. I assured the participants of protected confidentiality during data collection. This is explained further in the next section.

4.3.7 Researcher Diary

A journal was kept by the researcher to record and reflect on observations encountered in the role of both researcher and teachers/students that contributed to analysis throughout the study by providing contextual background to the data provided. There is no doubt that knowing the students and teachers on friendlier school grounds prior to the commencement of the study played an enormous role in ensuring continued participation. The advantage of working at the site of study allowed the researcher to easily follow up on responses for clarity or additional

comment. The site of study remained fresh and accessible for the entire time of data collection and beyond, minimising any distortion in the data that may otherwise have occurred if access to the site and the participants was limited. This was done either in the playground or occasionally in the classroom whenever the situation permitted. It was interesting to elicit more of the participants' points of view collectively rather than individually. When they were in groups, students willingly opened up to issues and concerns that either coincided or conflicted with the one-on-one interviews, and jotting down remarks proved useful. The researcher diary was used during informal chats to students who were either in 2nd secondary (grade 11) or 3rd secondary classes (grade 12) as they were the ones who took interest in learning more about TOEFL and SAT exam preparation. Each group varied in composition according to size, gender balance, age and religious background. The discussion groups comprised about 6-8 students and generally had both females and males in them. The participants' ages ranged between 15-17 years and the majority were of Muslim background, almost equally divided into Sunni and Shiites (but not strictly these sects).

4.4 Data Analysis

This section introduces the qualitative data analysis approaches used in this study. The data from the open-ended questions were in text form and were entered in a table in a Word document. Data analysis in this study followed the following two guidelines: Braun and Clark's (2006) six-step thematic analysis and Miles et al.'s (2014) interactive model of analysis containing three concurrent components: data condensation, data display and conclusion drawing/verification.

Qualitative data in this study was derived from three sources: (1) 21 semi-structured student interviews, (2) three admission officers, (3) two curriculum developers (CERD), and four staff members. These generated nine hours of student audio recordings, three hours of admission officers and curriculum developers' audio recordings, and two hours of staff audio recordings, totalling 14 hours. In addition there were the researcher diary, student surveys and document analysis.

4.4.1 Analysing the Documents

The documents collected served to inform the researcher about the national curriculum for each grade level and its learning objectives and the kind of changes and reforms stipulated by the Ministry of Education since 1997. The catalogues from the universities gave input about

the level of English language requirement for entry into the different American-style universities. Samples of the English section of SAT and the English subject of the Lebanese Baccalaureate exam served to show the differences in question types on each test. The documents were subjected to content analysis and findings were recorded in a table in a Word document.

4.4.2 Student Survey

The student survey informed the researcher the concerns, needs and language competencies students valued and to what extent they were being addressed. It also gave an indication of the number of students who anticipated entry into elite American-style universities and what they considered important knowledge in their senior years of study at school. The data were logged/summarised according to the responses given and placed into different topic themes. Key responses were then placed into a table for further analysis.

Questionnaires have become one of the most widely used research instruments for collecting survey data in social sciences (De Vaus, 2014; Dörnyei, 2010). It is an efficient instrument to collect a large amount of data because it is comparatively cheap and quick to administer (Bryman, 2008b, 2012). In addition to this "cost-effectiveness" (Dörnyei, 2010), well-designed questionnaires also have the advantage of reducing the bias of "interviewer effects" (Bryman, 2008b, 2012).

Questionnaires were used in this study to reach as many student participants as possible, so that a great amount of data could be collected in an efficient and cost-effective way. This allows for more representativeness of the student perceptions and makes it possible to find general patterns in learning and perceptions among the sample. The reduced bias of interviewer effects may increase the consistency and reliability of the results. Despite the advantages, questionnaires have disadvantages. For example, the researcher cannot prompt to clarify ambiguous and difficult questions or ask probing questions when the respondent is unable to fully answer the questions. On the other hand, the respondents are not always reliable and they may give superficial or dishonest answers. To address these issues, the researcher took into consideration the pros and cons of the different methods and the special characteristics of each data set, trying to gain a holistic understanding of the issue in question. On the other hand, when the researcher designed and administered the questionnaire, he followed the suggested guidelines as closely as possible in the hope of producing a

questionnaire of good quality and collect reliable and valid data. The next section outlines the procedures of this design process.

4.4.2.1 Development of the questionnaire

The construction of a good questionnaire is the key to obtaining reliable and valid information in survey research (Nardi, 2006). Especially in view of the disadvantages of questionnaires, it is important that the questionnaire be "totally self-explanatory to respondents" (De Leeuw & Hox, 2008). Many guidelines for constructing questionnaires are found in the literature (e.g. De Leeuw & Hox, 2008; De Vaus, 2014; DeVellis, 2003; Dörnyei, 2010). These researchers made valuable recommendations on how to design questionnaire questions (e.g. type and wording of questions), how to design the questionnaire (e.g. scale development by DeVellis (2003); layout/length of the questionnaire), and how to pilot/pretest and administer the questionnaire. Through the process of writing the questions and constructing the questionnaire, I followed the recommendations made by these experts. The following is a brief description of how I followed these guidelines in developing the questionnaire.

1. Selecting question types and levels of measurement suitable for the data;
2. Using plain and simple language instead of technical terms to reduce misinterpretation and ambiguity;
3. Keeping the items short and avoiding double-barrelled questions;
4. Including both positively and negatively worded items to avoid agreement bias;
5. Giving clear instructions for each part of the questionnaire;
6. Keeping the lay-out simple and easy to follow;
7. Keeping the questionnaire no longer than 20 minutes to complete with the slower writer in mind; and
8. Keeping open-ended questions to a minimum and choose the questions which the responder is able to answer.

4.4.3 Interviews

4.4.3.1 Interview recordings

Semi-structured interviews with students and teachers were conducted, following up the questionnaires. The student and teacher interviews aimed to further explore their interpretations of the current syllabus and its effectiveness in more detail and depth. It aimed to reveal the contextual factors that might have influenced their perspectives regarding the Lebanese Baccalaureate and the different university entry requirements. The questions were structured in a non-threatening manner so that data were elicited free from any impositions. The literature review helped the selection of the guiding questions. Some follow-up questions were also asked, based on the responses of the interviewees. They varied from one to another (see Appendix 1)

All interviews were logged/summarised according to topics and topic changes. Key sections were then identified for transcription. Approximately six hours of interviews in total were transcribed. Although this process was long and laborious, the experience of transcribing was extremely valuable in allowing me to revisit and re-examine comments and topics discussed in the conversations. This gave me the opportunity to pick up on comments of particular interest and identify gaps in information that could be used for further questioning for clarity in subsequent interviews or through other means of contact. Semi-transcribing the interviews first-hand forced me to pay attention to what interviewees had said and helped prepare for subsequent interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) or follow up communication. Another issue confronted during the course of data collection was that of immediate transcription of interviews. The literature suggests transcribing as soon as possible once the interview has been completed (Kvale, 1996). Unfortunately, this was not always a possibility due to the researcher's full-time work commitments. However, the advantage of working at the site of study allowed the researcher to easily follow up on responses for clarity or additional comment. The site of study remained fresh and accessible for the entire time of data collection and beyond, minimising any distortion in the data that may have occurred if the researcher had had only limited access to the site and the participants.

The data analysis of this study was a process that was on-going, simultaneous and recursive (Mertens, 2005), with the initial stage of analysis commencing with the data collection stage. Once transcribed, data were closely scrutinised, thematically coded and organised in relation to the study's research questions, following the advice that "The analysis process is

systematic and comprehensive, but not rigid" (Tesch, 1990, p. 95). Moreover, data analysis included reflective activities that resulted in a set of notes that recorded the analytical process.

4.4.3.2 Research diary

The research diary served as a powerful synthesis mechanism that provided pointers about how to begin to analyse the data. The notes were categorised into common themes based on recurring patterns in the data about perceptions of the school curriculum, SAT exams, teachers' knowledge of students' needs and the different beliefs and attitudes held by the participants. Cross-case synthesis proved effective particularly when analysing the congruities/incongruities in what participants reported about the different topics discussed and observed by the researcher.

4.4.4 Thematic Analysis

Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It not only involves organising and describing the data in rich detail but also interpreting and theorising the data. Even though it is widely used in qualitative research, and its use is apparently on the increase in recent years, it is still not yet a clearly identifiable approach with a distinctive cluster of techniques (Bryman, 2012). Braun and Clarke (2006) also claim that thematic analysis is a "poorly demarcated, rarely acknowledged" analytic approach. However, as Bryman (2012) has noted, the situation is changing. Some strategies in assisting thematic analysis have been proposed by some researchers. For example, the *framework* approach for thematic analysis (see Bryman (2012) for a brief introduction) and the techniques to identify themes proposed by Ryan and Bernard (2003) both provide guidelines for thematic analysis. In fact, Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that thematic analysis should be considered as "a method in its own right." This approach has features common with grounded theory which involves making comparisons and asking questions of the data. Hence, the researcher is moving back and forth with the data, analysing and then collecting more data. (Strauss and Corbin, 1990)

In this study, an inductive thematic analysis was conducted. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), inductive thematic analysis is "a process of coding the data *without* trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher's analytic preconceptions" (emphasis in original, p. 83). This inductive approach is suitable for this research because the research

aims to explore the teachers' and the students' perceptions of the changing entry requirements in tertiary institutions in Lebanon.

In the process of analysis, I did not employ any existing framework or categories. Instead, I tried to let the data lead the analysis and let meanings emerge out of the data. When the analysis is data-driven, it is more likely that the way the research participants understand and interpret the phenomenon be discovered and represented. However, it is acknowledged that the coding and analysis were not conducted in a vacuum. Since I have read literature extensively and have been aware of prior research, I cannot avoid a certain theoretical orientation and certain analytic interests. Also my professional experience would unavoidably influence the way I understand and interpret the data. In order to reduce these "inevitable biases" (Miles et al., 2014) for qualitative research, in the process of data analysis I tried to hold back my own perceptions about university entrance exams and the local curriculum and keep an open attitude towards the data. Interviews yield direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge (Patton, 2002, p. 4). This study was about hearing how participants felt about the changing requirements for university entry and whether the syllabus catered for the needs of either students or teachers. Their experiences and perspectives shed light on an on-going problem which needed to be addressed. Semi-structured interview questions inquired about the participants' choosing of one university over another, perceptions of the anticipated exams prior to entry into tertiary study and their appraisal of whether or not the education system and university scheme complement each other. While the categories of the questions remained the same for all the participants, some questions were reworded, replaced or omitted depending on each individual's role in the study. All students were asked the same questions so that the researcher could identify emergent themes and patterns. Each participant was interviewed once, though follow-up informal meetings were conducted with some participants.

4.5 Research Issues

4.5.1 Role of the Researcher

The participants were invited to take part in the study as teachers, students and acquaintances, despite having some form of relationship with the researcher, whether it be as close friends or colleagues, or as students who give a nod and smile while passing in the corridor and/or while in class. It is this connection that I had with the participants that made it possible to not only have the them agree to participate, but also for them to trust me enough to open up and

provide data that in some cases is highly sensitive and personal, and which normally would not be shared with colleagues in a work-related context that complied with a very rigid syllabus, particularly in the Brevet and Year 12 classes.

Whilst conducting the interviews, questions and comments were presented to the participants in the context of teaching and learning at the school. However, in their responses, the participants would not only respond as a teacher etc., but also from the perspective of other roles, such as a student, a colleague, a former student (Mike, a full time undergraduate at AUB commented: "everything I learned in English at secondary school went in vain upon preparing to take the SAT").

The role of the researcher in this study was to provide an environment in which the participant felt comfortable and confident enough to respond to questions related to exploring how the school syllabus caters for entry into American-style universities given the on-going changes to the admission process. Both teachers and students alike shared concerns and expressed a desire to participate in the study. This was achieved, firstly, through explaining in detail the purpose of the study and addressing any concerns the participants may have had with any aspect of the study. Allowing the participants to choose the location was also considered important in order for them to feel relaxed in familiar or comfortable surroundings, which facilitated more open and free conversations on the topics discussed. The role of the researcher is not only one of information-gatherer, but along with the participants, one of meaning-maker (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and source of knowledge. Together we engaged in a process of mutually constructing what it meant to be a teacher and student in this particular context, based on lived experiences and interpretations of the syllabus and standardised university entry exams and how each party perceived what constituted important knowledge. Despite the solid relationship established between the researcher and participants, the researcher ensured that objectivity was achieved during every encounter by gaining permission from the gatekeeper at the school, in this case the principal, who provides practical advice for negotiating entry sites for research. (Morse, 2010). Being a teacher at the site facilitated this process and permission was immediately granted to conduct the study. The fact that the researcher was a teacher for more than 15 years meant he was trusted and appreciated. As an insider, it was important to be objective and unbiased in the shaping of knowledge. This required the researcher to build more inclusive ways to discover the multiple views of the participants. Hence, each participant at the school was invited to participate in the study with the knowledge of the principal which is how he or she gained

verbal consent prior to any involvement in the study. This way the researcher was able to step back from the role of teacher/colleague and strictly play the role of researcher. The classes that were used to conduct the study were students I was not teaching at the time and my colleagues were teaching levels different from mine.

4.5.2 Ethical Issues

As a teacher/researcher, this posed several ethical issues, most importantly ethical ones concerning researching colleagues and students one has come to know well. It was the researcher's intention to view the site of the study as an insider, but one who could be in the role of a researcher too. By the participants I was viewed more as a colleague or teacher than a researcher. However, for those with whom the researcher was less acquainted, like the recruitment officer at AUB and the personnel staff at CERD, there may have been some slight initial reservations about being involved in the study due to questions concerning the true intention of the study and use of the data gathered. Once I had managed to set their minds at ease on these issues, they were happy to participate and expressed their opinions freely and openly. Such ethical issues were addressed in the following manner:

- Participants were assured of privacy and confidentiality in relation to data gathered throughout the study. The purpose and intentions of the study were carefully explained to the participants to earn their trust and understanding.
- Informed consent was received from colleagues, students and other participants in the form of signed consent forms that outlined the objectives and procedures of the study, as well as the rights and expectations of participants.
- Participation was on a voluntary basis.
- Ownership of data by participants was ensured by regular contact and communication between the participants and myself, allowing participants to review transcripts and provide opportunities for comments.

4.5.3 Tacit Knowledge

The researcher brings to the interview process more than just paper, pen and tape recorder. It is not possible to describe or explain everything that one "knows" in language form; some things must be experienced to be understood (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 195). One of the things that distinguishes methodology within a constructivist paradigm from conventional ones is the role of tacit or personal knowledge drawn on by the researcher during the course

of inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwandt, 2007). Credited with coining the term tacit knowledge, Polanyi (1967) distinguished it from propositional knowledge in which the knower is self-aware of the state of having knowledge (Schwandt, 2007). At the heart of this study are the issue of high school external exams or assessment and a set of standards keyed for success in university entry exams or post-secondary schooling. But the challenge in these discussions is to distinguish between external exams set by the Ministry of Education and standardised exams set by private agencies in collaboration with tertiary institutes. It was my observation over the many years at Castle High School which drew me to investigate this phenomenon that guided the formation of this project. It was tacit knowledge, accumulated over my many years of teaching at CHS and abroad that developed an urge to unravel the means of deciding access to tertiary places in an American-style university in Lebanon, given the current education system in place.

4.5.4 Insider / Outsider Dilemma

4.5.4.1 Researcher

I have been a teacher at CHS for more than fifteen years and have developed a strong and entrusted relationship with both students and staff alike. This in turn facilitated my role as a researcher and made it possible for participants to trust me enough to open up and provide data that in some cases were highly sensitive and personal, and which normally would not be shared with a teacher or colleagues in a work-related context.

4.5.4.2 Benefits of being a teacher at the school

Being a teacher at the school carried many benefits, some of which, attributed to my involvement and interaction with participants in daily work-related collaboration, exemplified the constructivist notion that the “inquirer and inquired-into are interlocked in an interactive process” (Mertens, 2005, p. 14). Furthermore, upon conducting interviews, I had been immersed in the programme as an instructor for almost a year and this had provided me with some first-hand experience in teaching secondary students. On the other hand, Wolcott (1990) points out, “outsider (or insider) perspective refers to an orientation, not a membership” (p. 137), which validates the possibility for an insider to distance him- or herself and view a culture from a social scientific framework. The roles that I took and was assigned to, together with the relationships that I formed with my participants, are part of the research context (Graue & Walsh, 1998). How much of an insider or outsider I was depended

on with whom I interacted and what role my participants perceived me to be in. The researcher is an inescapable and inseparable part of the environment in which the participants exist, act and express/exchange their views. My role as an instructor was a natural part of the study; my role as researcher, however, was *not*. Therefore, while formal interviews and test examining analysis gained outsider insights, it was also of vital importance for me to have casual conversations when I needed to gain insider knowledge and perspectives.

4.5.5 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are commonly regarded as important criteria to establish and assess the quality of quantitative research (Bryman, 2012). Qualitative researchers, though agreeing on the importance of maintaining good quality and rigor in qualitative research, have diverse views as to whether the traditional criteria are relevant for qualitative research (e.g. Lincoln & Guba 1985; Wolcott, 1990) and they have not agreed on a set of established standards or specified criteria to assess the quality of qualitative research. Until recently, this issue of quality in qualitative research is still contested (Bryman, 2012). Different criteria have been proposed by qualitative researchers taking different stances (e.g. Hammersley, 1992; LeCompre & Goetz, 1982; Lincoln & Guba 1985). Being aware of the diverse views, I mainly followed Lincoln & Guba's (1985) 'trustworthiness criteria' and the practical guidelines in regard to conducting good qualitative research proposed by Miles et al. (2014) in addressing the validity and reliability in this study. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness comprises four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. They parallel the traditional criteria of internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity respectively (Bryman, 2012; Miles et al., 2014). Where applicable, I made a genuine attempt to apply these criteria in this study. In the following section, I will present how I applied them in detail.

4.5.6 Credibility (Internal Validity)

Credibility is concerned with demonstrating whether the descriptions or accounts of a particular social event the researcher arrives at "can actually be sustained by the data" and whether the interpretations and findings could accurately describe the phenomena being researched (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). To ensure internal validity, the current research employed several techniques, such as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation and peer debriefing as proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

1. As a teacher researcher, I was one of the participant members of the teaching and learning environment. This enabled "prolonged engagement" in the natural setting and "persistent observation" of the culture, behaviour as well as the context. This familiarity with the context and culture helped to "identify pervasive qualities as well as atypical characteristics" (Gay et al., 2012), which is likely to lead to thorough appreciation and understanding of the phenomenon.
2. Triangulation of methods and data sources was adopted. Where it produced convergent conclusions, more confidence in producing convincing and credible findings and interpretation could be established. When it produced contradictory results, I tried to explore the context and provide tentative explanations.
3. I tried to provide "thick" descriptions (Geertz, 1973) and full reports to help with in-depth understanding. Where possible, I described the context for the descriptions to help the audience judge the plausibility of the accounts. When conducting analysis, "discrepant data" or negative evidence was taken into consideration and rival explanations were sought (Miles et al, 2014; Wolcott, 1994).

4.5.7 Transferability (External Validity)

Traditional, external validity is concerned with generalisability, the "applicability of findings" to other social settings and contexts (Gay et al., 2012). Because qualitative research studies are context-bound, they do not regard generalisable conclusions as their main preoccupation. Qualitative researchers typically seek for depth instead of breadth (Bryman, 2012; Gay et al., 2012). Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that the naturalist inquirer "can provide only the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility"(p. 316). The following measures were taken to ensure transferability of this study:

1. I provided a full description about the sample, the settings and procedures to enable other researchers to compare this study with their own research settings. They can then assess the potential transferability of the findings.
2. Relevant literature and previous research findings were related in interpreting the results of this study. This also helps the audience to judge the degree of transferability and appropriateness for their own settings.

3. Limitations of this study are explicitly stated and areas of further research are suggested at the end of this study.

4.5.8 Dependability (Reliability)

Dependability is concerned with the consistency of the process of the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose "inquiry audit" to examine the process of an inquiry so as to determine its dependability.

1. I kept complete records of all phases of the process of this study, including formulation of research questions, literature review notes, instrument development information, and all versions of the questionnaires, all research-related emails and pilot surveys.
2. Besides a detailed account of how the analysis was carried out in the report, an "audit trail" was also retained for the findings of the inquiry to be examined so as to determine the "confirmability" of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, see next point). This includes all raw data, both in printed form and electronic form; data reduction and analysis records (notes, reflections, summaries, diagrams etc.); all the findings and interpretations.
3. I also discussed my study with my supervisor regularly, and sought advice from other experts as well as from other research students. This process helped to expose my personal perspectives and interpretations to a wider community check, therefore raised awareness of potential researcher biases and encouraged constant self-reflection on the research process.

4.5.9 Confirmability (Objectivity)

Confirmability is concerned with ensuring neutrality or objectivity (Bryman, 2012; Miles et al, 2014). The researcher should maintain a relatively neutral stand and be explicit about the inevitable biases, act in good faith to avoid overt conduct of the research and the findings. In addition to the "confirmability audit" proposed by Lincoln and Guba mentioned above, I also followed the following guidelines to obtain objectivity:

1. I described explicitly the methods and procedures of the study, including data collection and analysis and conclusion drawing in detail.

2. Through the process of this project, I was aware of my special role as a teacher researcher and my own personal values and assumptions about teaching and learning, and I do not deny their influence on the research design and implementation. However, I also tried to read literature extensively and position myself in a broad research context, so that I could make informed decisions about this study. More importantly, when collecting and analysing data, I used an inductive approach, letting the participants tell their own stories and reveal their perspectives. This enabled the inferences and conclusions made to remain faithful to the original data. I acknowledge that my interpretation provided in the study is only one of the many possible interpretations. Even though I made a great effort to avoid personal biases, the conclusions are by no means free from questioning and are subject to revision.
3. I paid special attention to the data which seemed different from or contradictory to either my own perceptions or the perspectives from current literature. Presenting and discussing them is part of the analysis process. While making conclusions, rival conclusions were also considered.

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodology of this study framed by the interpretive paradigm as is the basis for qualitative research. This approach adopts the belief that the researcher is part of the construction of knowledge and plays a profound and engaging role with the participants. Teachers, students and staff from varied contexts responded to a number of leading questions during semi-structured interviews, which took place during the academic year 2008-2009.

A digital recorder was used to capture the conversations between researcher and participants. The recordings were transcribed and coded thematically according to recurring themes that emerged from the findings. The data was then analysed by comparing content, defining conceptual similarities, and discovering patterns. The role of the researcher as insider-outsider was discussed. Employed full-time at the same university and working alongside the participants who were also colleagues, provided the researcher the advantage of familiarity with the participants, minimising the awkwardness or reluctance to participate in research with complete strangers. However, it was also noted that a certain distance needed to exist to allow the data that emerged to speak for itself.

Chapter Five – Findings

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter described the methodology for the research conducted into the issues surrounding tertiary entry and secondary school students in Lebanon. The qualitative study relied on interview data from the stakeholders: teachers, a school principal, curriculum designers, university admission officers and the students themselves. The chapter also addressed research issues such as the researcher as teacher and 'insider' in the school context.

This chapter presents key findings from the interviews and surveys addressing the key research question:

What are the implications of the changing tertiary entry requirements in Lebanon for student access, school curriculum and key stakeholders?

Motivating this question is the impact of the rapid change in requirements for university entry into private American-style universities in Lebanon and the growing importance of the English language and American-style universities. The notion of 'changing requirements' recognises that these changes are impacting on the lives of exiting secondary students in the private school sector and their teachers alike. The contributing questions are as follows:

- *What are the differences and similarities in perceptions of tertiary administrators and curriculum developers of the changing entry requirements and the responsibilities in preparing for these?*
- *How do students at American-style universities perceive the challenges of the language-based entry tests and role and responsibilities of schools in preparing for these examinations?*
- *How do secondary students perceive and experience the issues of tertiary entry tests?*
- *In what ways do secondary teachers and executive respond to and accommodate the changing language requirements of American-style universities?*

5.2 Background to the Tests

Table 5.1 shows the changes in university entry requirements between 2000 and 2012 in Lebanon.

Table 5.1: University admission requirements prior to 2000 in comparison with admission requirements in 2012-2013 (data from university catalogues)

Universities	Entry requirements	Tests	Details
American University of Beirut **2000**	• Successful completion of grade 12 • High level of English proficiency	• EEE • Paper based TOEFL • Computer based TOEFL • IELTS	A minimum score of 500 on the EEE. A minimum score of 573 on the paper based and 230 on the computer based TOEFL. A minimum score of 5.5 in IELTS.
changes in 2012	**• 50% on final year averages in grade 10 and grade 11 (class rank must be among the top 25% in each)** **• 50% on SAT scores** **• SAT1 used as a replacement for all other entry exams**	**• SAT1 (reading+ maths)** **• IBT** **• EEE**	**380 and above on writing section of SAT1** **1100 sophomore arts (except Economics)or nursing II** **1200 for sophomore sciences** **1250 for sophomore engineering and architecture** **85 IBT** **560 EEE**
LAU **2000**	• Successful completion of grade 12 • Sound level of English proficiency	• EEE • Paper based TOEFL • Computer based TOEFL	A minimum score of 480 on the EEE. A minimum score of 560 on the paper based and 210 on the computer based TOEFL.
changes in 2012	**• 50% on final year averages in grade 10 and grade 11 (class rank must be among the top 25% in each)** **• 50% on SAT scores** **• SAT1 used as a replacement for all other entry exams**	**• SAT1 (reading+ maths)** **• IBT** **• EEE**	**380 and above on writing section of SAT1** **1100 sophomore arts (except Economics) or nursing II** **1200 for sophomore sciences** **1250 for sophomore engineering and architecture** **80 IBT** **500EEE**
LU (Lebanese University) **2012**	• Successful completion of grade 12 with restrictions for Humanities stream	• University designed exam for specific purposes.	Admission is determined by the stream students specialised in at secondary level. GS and LS are exempted from any entry exam. Humanities must sit for exam if they wish to study any science related major.
French Style Universities **2012**	• Successful completion of grade 12 • High level of French proficiency	• French-language entrance examination	To gain admission students must hold either the Lebanese or French Baccalaureate and pass a French-language entrance exam.
Other English style Institutions Ex: Balamand University Beirut Arab University Notre Dame University of Louaize HCU **2000**	• Successful completion of grade 12 • Sound level of English proficiency	• University designed exam for specific purposes • Paper based TOEFL • Computer based TOEFL	Some institutions use the TOEFL to determine level of proficiency and others use their own English entrance exams.
changes in 2012	**• 380 and above on writing section of SAT1** **• IBT 80**		

Details of the changing tertiary entry requirements were outlined in Chapter 2. The information in table 5.1 was obtained from university brochures, websites and other documentation.

The universities in table 5.1 are listed in order of what is considered their prestige as shown by their respective numbers of applications. AUB, LAU and HCU are the three that students attending CHS and a great number of other private schools in the province of South Lebanon opt for. These three universities now require that applicants to take either the SAT or one of several options. A satisfactory SAT score is the only one which generally exempts prospective applicants from any intensive English programme at university, meaning that students can enter the sophomore rather than the freshman year. The freshman student takes one year longer to complete his/her degree. Other pathways are through the internationally accredited English proficiency tests.

The TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) has existed in two distinct versions since 2005: iBT (internet Based TOEFL comprising: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing), once called cBT (computer Based TOEFL), and Institutional TOEFL (comprising: reading, listening and written expression and structure) or better known as paper-based TOEFL. Universities other than the ones referred to in table 5.1 generally accept the tests that they themselves set, such as the EEE and occasionally the IELTS.

5.3 The Tertiary Perspective

5.3.1 Interviews with Admission Officers

This section reports on interviews with Admissions Officers from the three universities AUB, LAU and HCU. They were questioned about the changing requirements and how well they thought secondary students were prepared for the tests and tertiary study.

5.3.2 AUB Admission Officer

Mohanad, the admissions officer at AUB, mainly communicated with new students about enrolment and visited schools to meet with prospective university students to discuss any questions about AUB while evaluating potential applicants. Mohanad strongly supported his university's shift to SAT as an entry requirement. He reported that not only were the students of English as a first second language taking the exam but even those with French background were taking it because American-style universities are in such great demand.

Mohanad was critical of the kind of English taught at private schools, particularly those that invested in a local curriculum. He saw very little correlation between what was being taught at secondary level and the kind of English command needed at tertiary level. He also claimed that very few students come into university knowing anything about intellectual property or what requirement criteria were used to determine entry into university. This he believed was the school's responsibility. His attitude to the Lebanese Baccalaureate was that it was a basis for entry but not sufficient.

> *No, but we just need it to see that the Lebanese student finished it and for foreign students that can apply to freshman class using the grade 10 and 11 if they don't have something that is equal to the grade 12, for example if they have a high school diploma they can apply to the freshman class, if they have other things such as the international Bac, the GCSE, the general secondary from the Middle Eastern countries all this is equal to the government secondary certificate issued in Lebanon so they can enter as sophomore they don't have to go through the freshman year. (Mohanad, June 2009)*

It is interesting that he saw the intake of the university not in terms of local Lebanese students but of students from the broader Middle East and beyond. For him the Lebanese exam was one of many possible prerequisites.

5.3.3 LAU Admissions Officer

Carmen, the admissions officer at LAU, had been at the university for more than twenty years. In response to the question about changing requirements she stated: "I only want to see the deserving and well cultured admitted into LAU." Her perception of the reason for the change was that it was important for LAU to be like AUB or even better. This was why, according to Carmen, the entry requirements for AUB and LAU have become very much the same for most entering sophomore and freshman students. Her own perceptions differed from those of Mohanad:

> *The SAT was introduced or should I say imposed upon the exam committee by the provost. Personally, I don't think it serves the purpose other than checking mathematics knowledge and a bit of insight into students' writing. (Carmen, July 2009)*

Her attitude was somewhat contradictory. Although she was not supportive of the SAT, she felt that its introduction was important to maintain the status of her university. However, her take on the Lebanese Baccalaureate was that it no longer had the same value as when she was a secondary high school student.

5.3.4 HCU Admissions Officer

The third admission officer, Liza from HCU, had been at the university for about eight years, almost as long as the university had been in existence. When asked about the type of English entry exam used at the university, she pointed out that 'TOEFL computer based' is the one most used, but that the university had more recently opted for the SAT. When asked for the reason in this change, she said that the marketing of the test and the fact that it is a highly reputable exam has made it high in demand. She also commented on the fact that her university had followed the lead of AUB in this change: "Hariri University generally follows suit because we belong to this community." (Liza, July 2009)

5.4.5 Summary

The reports from admissions officers indicate that the decision by AUB to introduce the SAT and to give preference to SAT scores had led to the other universities following suit.

In summary, the admission officers Mohanad, Carmen and Liza all show concern about the growing international needs for the English language, yet vary in regard to what constitutes an English proficiency exam most suitable for entry into American-style universities in Lebanon. The data indicate that all three officers presume that what works well for the best in setting the standards will unquestionably do the same for their institutes. In other words, if the elite universities are setting these standards for themselves both internationally and locally, then it is only normal for these institutes to follow suit. Two of the officers, Mohanad and Carmen, commented that the shift to SAT was more of an external decision rather than a local one due to the affiliations both have in terms of their educational philosophy, standards and practices of the American liberal arts model of higher education. They both thought that it was more about obtaining and sustaining accreditation by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Associations of Colleges and Schools in America which happens approximately once every eight years.

5.4 The View from the other Side: Interviews with CERD Officials

The Centre for Education Research and Development (CERD) is an autonomous staff organisation under the trusteeship of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. (MOEHE) CERD's mission is:

- Drafting curricula of academic and vocational education for pre-university stage;
- Revising and modifying the curricula according to learners' needs;
- Designing and writing text books; and
- Conducting educational research.

Salma, the Head of the English Department at CERD, participates in innovative educational research and development programs with external partners and performs in-house research activities to promote state school programs in Lebanon.

In response to questions about the role of CERD and English language teaching in schools Salma focused very much on the state school system rather than the private school system and on the role of English in the broader global environment.

She felt that the hours of English language teaching in the final stages of secondary school were insufficient for students to meet the demands and gain the required levels of proficiency. She pointed to problems with the levels of teacher proficiency in English:

> *I think we should have more hours of English … [despite] … the fact that the Sciences and the maths are being given in a foreign language; French or English, this will kind of compensate, yet we have a major problem in Lebanon which is the language competency of the teachers that give students other subjects, other than English at schools, so if their English is appropriate or accepted this will help the student, otherwise I don't think it's much of a help, if the model is not an accurate model of English. (Salma, June 2009)*

> *We are trying to develop confidence in English and teaching methodology by building the learning environment and prioritising the development of the systems, knowledge, skills and understanding to better equip young people in a global economy. (Salma, June 2009)*

It was only after specific questioning that Salma spoke about the issue of English and tertiary entry. She responded that the concern with English for tertiary entry was not the main one of curriculum designers.

Paul also working for CERD designs and develops curriculum content, i.e. training material to be used by the training facilitators/instructors and training participants, and reports to his superior, Salma, once a fortnight when he needs to submit written reports and they have 20-30 minute meetings.

Paul was positive about the English syllabus in secondary schools and commented on its efficiency and how it aligned with Bloom's taxonomy patterns of learning.

> *The current syllabus measures students' competencies in reading comprehension, logical relations, problem-solving behaviour and inferential abilities. (Paul, June 2009)*

In response to questions about tertiary entry he stated that most students attending state schools are given the opportunity to develop skills that would cater for entry into state universities and even private institutes depending on their financial capacity. He did not refer to the more prestigious universities AUB, LAU and HCU, whose admission officers report that the changing entry requirements are the result of an external decision and designed to boost standards and ensure only the deserving gain entry, while CERD personnel made the assumption that the curriculum in place served its purpose and supported students in their admission process into higher education. University admission officers identified the introduction of SAT as a development since it gives their institute international recognition whereas the CERD personnel reported that the national curriculum was designed to serve local needs so the changing entry requirements at the more selective universities in the country had no impact on curriculum development or design since they served a national entity.

5.4.1 Summary

Both Salma and Paul work for CERD which aligns with programmes set by the board of Education in Lebanon/Ministry of Education. Its primary responsibility is to support the achievement of learning in state schools. This is despite the reality that only 47% of students attend state schools and 53% attend either private or semi-private schools. Enrolments in private schools exceed those in the public sector by 2:1 (CERD, 2005). The semi-private

schools are operated and largely funded by religious and some other charitable organisations (Hashem, 2002). These findings clearly show that applying a Lebanese curriculum on a private school can have negative repercussions on the learning goals of the more advanced learners who generally have higher tertiary goals than those attending state schools.

The concerns of Salma and Paul were more with the state secondary schools and general universities. Their reticence to comment on private schools and universities was understandable. They did not comment on the impact that changes in the private universities and schools might be having on the state system. Salma, however, did comment on how her son was preparing for the SAT and struggling to do so simply because the school he went to did not prepare him for such an exam.

It is apparent that the perceptions of each are conflicting. The tertiary administrators both believed that in order to maintain high standards at each university, it is vital to adopt the SAT as a required admission exam to set the standards for other competing universities. The curriculum developers, on the other hand, found the SAT no cause for concern as their main body of students were those that belong to the public sector , many of whom sought entry into the government university or the mid- private university that doesn't require the SAT.

5.5 University Students' Input – Contrasting Views

How do former students of CHS, now at university, view the entry tests and the role of the school and university in facilitating/supporting the entry process? Six former students of CHS, now undergraduates at LAU, AUB and HCU, were interviewed to gain insight into their university admission experiences and the kind of concerns they shared in that regard.

- *Do you consider your school helped you in getting ready for tertiary study?*
- *What were some of the main different language challenges in meeting the standards for university entry?*
- *How did you prepare for the entry exams into university?*
- *What changes do you recommend your English teachers make at school so that future university students are better prepared for tertiary education?*

In response to the first question, Samir and Ali at HCU said they were content with the knowledge they acquired at school, particularly in the science subjects, as they were both doing mechanical engineering and had no trouble gaining entry into university since they both sat for the institutional TOEFL exam. In response to the question about the different

language challenges faced on English entry exams, Ali expressed some concerns as he did not feel as competent as Samir:

> *The listening part was very hard to follow and understand. They spoke too quickly. (Ali, May 2009)*

He also mentioned that he had to do one remedial English class before being able to integrate into mainstream classes. He reported it was costly for his parents and time consuming for him.

Samir commented that the passages in the reading part of the test were either too long or too short and contained difficult vocabulary:

> *I spent too much time rereading lines so I could understand them better. (Samir, May 2009)*

Mike and Mira, who were now at AUB, one majoring in medicine and the other in mechanical engineering, sat for the SAT and found this test extremely challenging, especially the vocabulary and reading sections of the test. When asked if they felt the school prepared them well for such an exam both expressed dissatisfaction:

> *And if we were to depend solely on the national program, the results would have been a disaster that would have dwarfed the first and second world war. Of course, all the information on when to apply and how, I had to obtain on my own. Our school administration never seemed to help us apply to universities and whatever information they had was either out-dated, or flawed! (Mike, May 2009)*

Mira, on the other hand, claimed that the system was "misleading" and "unfulfilling":

> *Instead of adding the number of English sessions at secondary schooling, they took them away and you call that getting us ready for university. (Mira, May 2009)*

When Mike was asked about the kind of recommendations he would make to the current teachers of English at school, he said that his proficiency in English did not meet the requirements of the university:

> *And I also noticed that my proficiency in English came not from following the national program, but from doing exactly the opposite! Perhaps this should be a*

wakeup call to forsake this abomination, and pursue a different course of action. (Mike, May 2009)

Haifa and Saleem were both at LAU in their second year majoring in business and computer science. Haifa spoke of the several attempts she had made at the SAT and how she ended up sitting for the EEE before being admitted into LAU on the condition of undergoing intensive English courses for one whole semester. In response to the question concerning the language differences and the type of challenges she encountered, much was said about the level of difficulty and how the type of language needed to succeed in the official exam fell very short of achieving the same on the SAT/EEE. Another concern was the lack of knowledge about the logistics of the exams and the number of times she was permitted to take the exam. Haifa commented:

A school like ours should show more concern for the SAT and prepare its students on all levels and even assist with the registration because we don't know what to do. (Haifa, May 2009)

Saleem in response to how well he considered the school prepared him for entry into university blamed his language deficiencies on the school and said that QSS emphasised subjects that did not serve his needs:

Doesn't the school know that we have to be ready for these university exams? Why didn't it do something? All it cares about is getting us ready for the official exams. (Saleem, May 2009)

5.5.1 Summary

In response to RQ2 "How do students at American- style universities perceive the challenges of the language- based entry tests and role and responsibilities of schools in preparing for these examinations?"

Four of the students expressed anger and frustration at the school for not providing them with sufficient information about the exams or adequately preparing them. Three reported that the school had not adapted to the changes adopted by the universities or to the needs of their students. Three students stated that had the school been less focused on the government exams and more on SAT and TOEFL they would have managed to enter university more easily without any intensive English program. Mira went on further to add that she felt that

had the focus of the English program been on SAT and TOEFL preparation as well as the external exam this would not only have prepared them well for these tests, but also made them more aware of the type of knowledge needed to do well at university.

Three interviewees criticised the school for focusing primarily on the National Curriculum, and neglecting the SAT and other English proficiency skills. On the other hand, the two students at HCU expressed gratitude for being equipped with sound learning tools, particularly in the science-related subjects, for they were doing well in their chosen majors, but would have liked to be exempted from their intensive English classes at the beginning of their university studies.

It seems that the factors influencing students' aspirations largely relied on their English proficiency. Two had to undergo some language course before joining mainstream classes at their chosen university. The point Mira makes about catering for both the national external exam and the various multiple entry type exams reflected the consensus view.

5.6 Learner Needs Contest School Needs:

What were students' aspirations for post-school career and tertiary study? In the third week of November 2008 a survey was conducted with 50 students in the third secondary classes (Year 12). This section reveals the findings of the survey from these students in two Science section classes and one Humanities section at CHS. Students completed a questionnaire ranking the current English curriculum and how well it aligned with their needs for university entry.

The results of the survey revealed several issues. Forty of the 50 students in year 12, approximately 80%, wanted to attend higher prestige American-style universities. The remainder indicated they wanted to study in a non-American type university, or join the workforce directly on completion of their high school education.

Thirty-eight students commented that although teachers showed interest in their learning needs, they did not provide them with sufficient support because the national syllabus stood in their way. This was also a priority to teachers as was revealed in the data collected in both the survey and teachers interviews. Although some teachers did take notice of the students' complaints and concerns, 20 students reported that the teachers did not take any notice of what they said. When asked about the competencies they felt that they were most useful to their learning experience, 43 mentioned that essay writing and short response writing were at

the top of the list, but 27 wished they had more opportunities to explore listening and speaking competencies. From the survey results it appeared that learners' needs conflicted with the school's needs as both perceived important knowledge to serve distinct outcomes. In other words, students expressed concerns about the language competencies needed to succeed on an exam such as the SAT or any other standardised exam which required skills and knowledge beyond the scope of a national external exam which was the underlying focus of the school. This was evident from the responses given by students condemning the amount of notice teachers took of what they said and the kind of action taken to meet their needs. The results revealed that students' needs were not being addressed, particularly for the many who wished to gain admission into an elite tertiary institute. The survey responses indicate that the skills needed most to succeed at the tertiary level were neglected by teachers. Eighty per cent of students reported that little or no attention was given to report writing and university form filling skills. Furthermore, 65% of the students expressed they had weaknesses when giving an oral presentation and writing an essay.

5.7 The SAT Experience

The 21 students interviewed were divided into pre-test takers and post-test takers and this was concluded from a short questionnaire prior to the interview. The researcher was able to identify the different test takers by collecting data from interviewees before the interview. Eleven pre-test takers were yet to take the exam and 10 post-test takers had already sat for one of the standardised tests. This was done so to get both perspectives on the different experiences prior and after taking the exam, such as gaining insight into the test taking experience, what students' impressions were, and how prospective students viewed this if they anticipated taking the exam. Terminal classes at this school comprise students from the three different streams/tracks: Humanities, Life Sciences and General Sciences. For some students, the SAT had already been attempted after the completion of Year 11 in the hope that they could gain the score needed for admission into the chosen university before starting Year 12. The test score is valid for two years and this meant that the student could focus on the demanding programme in Year 12. The affluent students whose parents can afford the cost of test registration give themselves more chances of scoring the desired result and may do this after completing Year 11 during their summer break. It is important to note that all the students who were surveyed and interviewed at the time were students in their last year at high school and were selected from the three different tracks Life Sciences, General Sciences and Humanities.

5.7.1 Pre-Test Takers

Those that were yet to take the SAT exam generally viewed their upcoming first attempt as a trial run and did some individual preparations by buying a personal guide book that contained sample tests and tips or they sought help through private tutors. Two students complained about the cost of the book, claiming it was being sold for USD 54 in the book stores. All eleven considered the SAT of greater importance than the Baccalaureate external exam as it was considered a high-stakes exam. Seven of the eleven pre-test takers said that their strength lay in the mathematics part of the test and that they did their best to acquire as much knowledge prior to the test to compensate for shortcomings in the English section of the exam. Only two students expressed confidence in taking the exam as they were among the higher achieving group and applied much individual study effort in anticipation of the exam. Six of the respondents complained about how preparing for the exam while meeting the requirements of a school programme placed a lot of stress on their lives and deprived them of personal leisure time. When asked what they thought the school could do to improve their chances of success on such an exam, eight of the eleven said some preparation needed to be incorporated into their English syllabus. The other three mentioned more time off school during the exam period to prepare better.

5.7.2 Post-Test Takers

All ten post-test takers expressed their dismay at the English part of the test, claiming it was very long and too difficult. Nine students said that the maths section was quite easy except for the properties component because they had not covered it yet in their syllabus. All ten test takers said that the vocabulary was too challenging and the reading passages were hard to comprehend. Eight complained that multiple choice questions dominated the exam and that they lacked competence in this question type. Two students who had received support from their siblings and applied individual effort prior to the exam felt confident about the exam despite its difficulty. When asked if their high schooling prepared them for the exam, seven of the 10 expressed satisfaction in the mathematics section, but felt only moderately prepared for the writing part of the test and almost completely unprepared for the other sections of the English part, such as written structure, reading comprehension and vocabulary in context. Eight students said that they were able to respond to the writing part of the test, but five were not very pleased with their responses due to time constraints. Only two felt they had produced sound responses to the prompts in writing, whereas in the other sections of the English part eight of the 10 were in doubt and worried about their results.

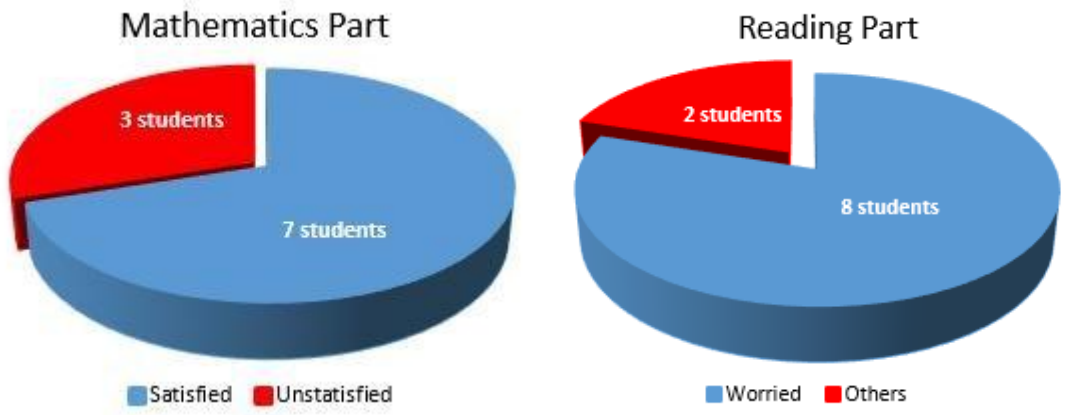

Figure 5.1: Mathematics and Reading Sections

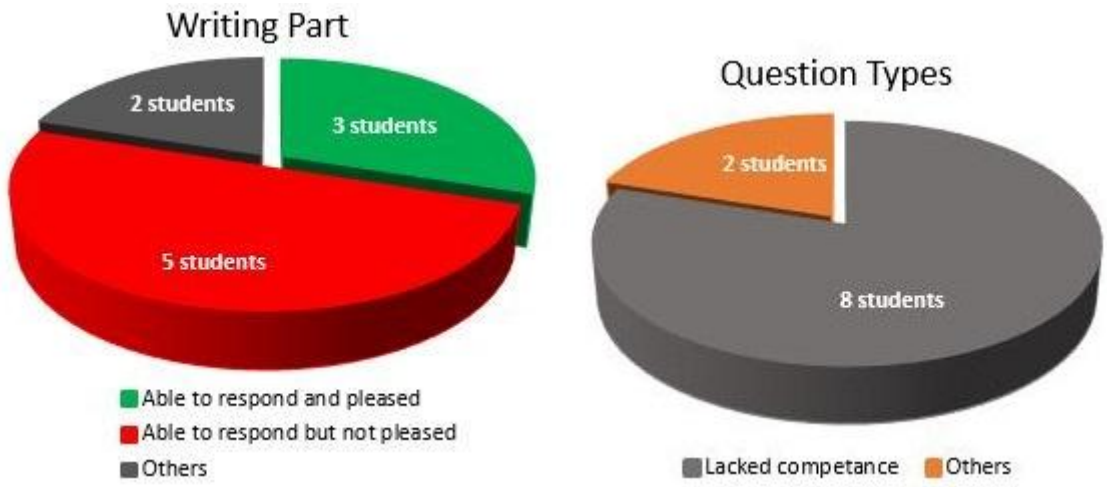

Figure 5.2: Writing Section and Question Types

The figures reveal that the greater percentage of post-test takers struggled with the English section of SAT and this meant more attempts at taking the exam were forecast because the results students sought had not been achieved.

5.8 Admission into University

This section reports the findings from all the 21 students who were re-interviewed at the end of the academic year in late May 2008-2009 before exiting the final year at school and before they had gained access to their preferred university – the American University of Beirut, the Lebanese American University or the Hariri Canadian University. These interviews were shorter and ran for approximately five minutes and were audio-recorded. Even though all 21 students interviewed gained access, only three managed this on their first attempt and five of

the students gained conditional access with the proviso that they participate in English language courses at the universities prior to taking up full time study in their major courses.

The students interviewed all sought entry into one of the above universities and felt that their learning needs were not being met in English, particularly in the very first term of Year 12 at school as this is when some Year 12 students have their final chance to take all scheduled entry exams administered by AMIDEAST for the upcoming academic year at university.

The above findings reveal how secondary students perceive and experience the issues of tertiary entry tests. This is elaborated further in the data below.

Table 5.2, which is based on feedback from the students concerned, highlights the number of times each student attempted the different types of exams and how successful they were in the process. All eventually gained entry into a recognised university. None transitioned directly to employment. Table 5.2 illustrates the data collected from the re-interview that took place around the end of May of the same academic year (2008-2009) and clearly shows how many attempts each student took the exam and which universities they had applied to. The table indicates the track each student belonged to and the outcome after each attempt.

Table 5.2: Number of times each student attempted the different types of exams

Approved OR Rejected	Attempts	Exam Taken	University	Subject Tracks
Approved	1	SAT	AUB	LS 1
			LAU	GS 1
		TOEFL	HCU	LS 2
	2	SAT	AUB	LS 3
				GS 2
				GS 3
				GS 4
			LAU	GS 5
		TOEFL	HCU	HU 1
				HU 2
				LS 4
				LS 5
		EEE	LAU	HU 3
	3	SAT	AUB	LS 6
			LAU	GS 6
		TOEFL	LAU	HU 4
Rejected	2	SAT	AUB	HU 5
				LS 7
				GS 7
	3	SAT	AUB	HU 6
			LAU	HU 7

Vignette 1: Being let down

Samir, a Humanities student wanted to major in business at AUB, but got rejected twice because he did not have the competence in English and Maths. He blamed his failures on the school, claiming that it was the responsibility of the school to ensure success on these exams: ***"My brother got into AUB and I can't understand why I won't." "My parents have supported us and all they wanted to see was for me to graduate from AUB. I have let them***

down because the school let me down." "My mother graduated from AUB and that's why it was so important for my parents." *Samir clearly is frustrated and considers himself a failure. His English is fluent, but the SAT in his words was "a language from out of space".*

Vignette 2: AUB or nothing

Dima, a Life Sciences student, took the SAT three times before gaining admission and said she was ready to give up a whole semester to coach herself to gain entry into AUB. ***"The third attempt was my last chance if I were to start in the fall semester of the upcoming year."*** *She explained that the maths part was quite easy for her, but the English part was her shortcoming.*

"I became so obsessed with the exam that I stopped all my social networking at home and even took a few days off school to prepare." *She complained how the school did not help her during her ordeal, instead added more pressure by constantly giving weekly quizzes and tests on other subjects at school. She reported that she wanted to study medicine and it had to be done at AUB if she were to get a good job offer in the future.*

Vignette 3: Just missed out

Adham, a General Sciences student, initially had AUB as his priority and was one of the brightest maths students in the view of his teachers, but failed the English section badly so opted for LAU instead. He claimed to have missed out by 110 marks. He received 990 and needed 1100 on the SAT to do Economics. He had been a student at CHS since kindergarten, but claimed his problems in English began in grade 9. When asked why he thought this to be, he responded: ***"I remember I used to enjoy the English classes, but in grade 9 I just didn't like it anymore."*** *He went on to report that despite being rejected at AUB, he will do a semester at LAU and then request a conditional transfer to AUB because this is where his parents want him to graduate from. In reply to a question whether he blamed the school in any way, Adham commented that the issue of university readiness for exiting students is a bitter experience and felt there is negligence and ignorance on the school's part.*

Only three of the 21 students were able to achieve a sufficiently high score on the entrance test to gain admission to the university of their choice on their first attempt. Of the other 18 students, 13 made two attempts and five made three attempts. Ultimately, 25% of the students were rejected for direct admission to their preferred university. Ten students reported that it was frustrating for both their parents and themselves, as re-registering for the exam came

with additional cost in terms of exam fee and further coaching. It had both financial and psychological impacts on parents and students alike.

Being rejected did not mean that the students were unable to enrol, but failing to meet the English language proficiency requirement meant to either do the Intensive English Course (IEC) taught by the Department of English in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences in the case of AUB, or the equivalent in the Lebanese American University, or to take an alternative exam such as IELTS, TOEFL or EEE to demonstrate a level of English proficiency consistent with the demands of a programme carried out almost exclusively in English. This meant of course familiarising themselves with a whole new test, containing a new series of materials to be mastered prior to taking the exam. The vast majority of students gave their opinion of the difficulty of the SAT and some specifically stressed this point.

> *I personally found the SAT critical reading part to be extremely challenging and inequitable for several reasons. First of all, the vocabulary part was too difficult, and I believe that the schools in Lebanon find difficulty in helping us acquire the vocabulary skills. Regardless of our school's attempts, most of the students who get admitted into prestigious colleges seem to graduate from schools with international systems. In addition to that, the options provided to answer the questions are very similar, thus making it hard for us to answer them. (Natalie, June 2009)*

Another student commented:

> *When I was on the way to the venue to sit for the SAT exam, I was so anxious and worried. However, when I had a try, I found out that I shouldn't worry anymore about the SAT because it's not an appropriate test. It doesn't really test me. It looked like Chinese test to me, and I don't think the Lebanese curriculum should change and become similar to that in America. I don't really care anymore if I do get accepted at a university that requires SAT score or not because this exam doesn't focus on my real abilities. (Lynn, June 2009)*

These comments are representative of the vast majority of the students with only the three highest-scoring students making comments such as the following:

> *SAT is overrated. I believe that it does not measure each person's capability to survive in college. When I did the SAT, I was anxious and worried, but while I was doing it, I found the maths and writing parts easy. The critical reading was*

excruciating. I did not find a problem in the language used, but I did not finish on time because it was really tricky. The items for the questions seemed to differ in nothing but trivial clues which need meticulous observations. (Ahmed, June 2009)

When asked about the preparations they did to meet entry requirements for exams like the TOEFL/SAT, six of them relied on siblings for assistance, five did their own investigation via the internet and the remaining eleven sought help from their teachers and school. Even with the help that some received from their teachers, many saw this to be insufficient and felt teachers were not equipped to deliver the material adequately. These were some of the responses students gave when asked about how they knew about these tests:

My sister applied before and gave me the guide book. (Student 11-GS)

I asked some AUB graduates, they told me if you want to apply to this university, you have to do the SAT. The first attempt was just without any preparation so the objective was just to get an idea. (Student 4-Humanities)

The school took us to a fair for AUB and we asked the representatives what we have to do in order to get accepted. (Student 17-LS)

Mainly concerned teachers will focus on this issue, they tell us the available universities and they see our potentials and what we have high skills in but the principal doesn't focus on this issue, but she should. (Students 2-HU)

In answer to questions on the effectiveness of the secondary English curriculum, students in the Life and General Science streams reported that it did not meet their needs particularly because only two periods of English were allotted to their syllabus. This lack of attention to English meant primarily focusing on the official exam and ignoring areas of proficiency and study skills that students needed in preparation for university entry tests. On the other hand, the Humanities stream students with six periods of English a week reported that teachers had time for the SAT and TOEFL tests as well as the official exam. Overall, students felt that the SAT and other standardised tests dictated their prospective entry into university rather than the external examinations and many reported they felt let down.

When students were asked what the school could do to help students better prepare for the different exams one student commented:

Give English more importance, to start preparing for the SATs in younger years, like people in the US start from grade 5 or 6, we don't even prepare for the English in the SAT, we take courses outside of school. (Student 15-LS)

Another student went on to say:

It's kind of ironic to do well in school tests but fail SATs, I do well on my English test, but in the SATs you should be prepared grammatically, it's about analysing and we didn't take this kind of questions in our school, we just took what is in the government books. (Student 12-Humanities)

Thematic analysis of data indicated that students had negative feelings about the SAT and this mainly resulted from the inflexibility exercised by the school. Students expressed dismay and disappointment at having to independently prepare for a high-stakes exam without the guidance and help of their teachers and school, particularly at such a decisive learning phase in their schooling. This emerged from one of the brighter students who commented:

Our parents pay a lot of money to send us to this school because it's considered as one of the best, but unfortunately I feel we've been let down. (Ali, Nov 2008)

5.8.1 Summary

Findings from the survey, research diary and interviews with students indicate a mismatch in goals and attitudes between teachers and learners. Irrespective of the specialised tracks that students were taking in Year 12, most students expressed the need for a more flexible syllabus catering for learners' needs at school and beyond. The Lebanese Baccalaureate was aimed at giving students the background skills and knowledge for their field of study but was diminishing in importance in the students' eyes because it was not sufficient to gain tertiary entry.

5.9 Teachers' and Head Teacher's Perceptions

Meg is a teacher of English to grades 10 and 11 at CHS. She teaches three sections of grade 10, using a literature-based curriculum, and is allocated five periods weekly for each section, whereas in grade 11 she teaches two sections and the curriculum is designed to cater for the Lebanese Baccalaureate exam in which three periods are designated for each section. Most of the units in the prescribed text book have science-related themes because students are to be streamed into General Sciences or Life Sciences tracks the following year.

Bianca teaches English to grade 9 and has had experience teaching grade 10 and 11 in previous years. She strictly prepares students for the Brevet (grade 9) national external exam which is considered a burden on teachers and students alike. The prescribed text book is similar to that used in government schools.

The Head of English, Kamal, is currently teaching the 3rd secondary classes (the LS and GS streams) and oversees the English programme in the secondary level at CHS. He reports fortnightly to the principal and conducts weekly coordination meetings with faculty staff.

5.9.1 Teachers' Perceptions

Teacher interview data raised questions about the value of a focus on university test preparation and its appropriateness for all of the students. Both Meg and Bianca argued that, for the most part, they had an obligation to cater for the needs of learners and not only those with high expectations. There was some concern that by focusing only on those wishing to attend prestigious universities and primarily addressing their needs they would exclude others who may not be given the opportunity to achieve all that they possibly could. Teachers felt some of their best teaching time was spent drilling students to excel on an exam.

> *Our job as English teachers is to teach language skills that cater for learners needs and that does not mean drilling them on test taking skills. (Meg, April 2009)*

The specific skills required for each test also presented problems. During the interviews, both teachers stated that each university entrance test required its own unique skills and they wondered whether time spent in class teaching these skills would perhaps not be better spent broadening the students' overall ability. Meg and Bianca added that class time is by its nature finite and precious, and what time would be used in additional activities would necessarily have to be at the expense of other work. Bianca reported that she was constrained in her focus on spoken language skills because of the need to meet programme objectives drawn from the national curriculum.

> *I really feel like we need to practice on listening and speaking more but unfortunately sometimes we get a limited amount of time to finish a certain set of other objectives so we can't. (Bianca, April 2009)*

While neither teacher expressed negative comments about the teaching of spoken language skills per se, they commented that to do so would need some degree of careful planning and

reorganisation of the programme. The question whether the objective of education was to impart knowledge and skills or to teach students how to pass exams was also raised. Meg felt that the washback effect of the entrance tests would be to narrow the curriculum with too much of a skills focus.

> *In grade 10 I do have liberty but in grade 11 I'm not allowed at all because I have to prepare them for the official exam and I'm required to make my students completely competent for the skills required for (Meg, April, 2009)*

Meg identified the different skill focus between different types of questions, requiring critical reading or analysis. When asked what she felt was the genuine difference between the two different syllabi in place at the different levels using different prescribed books, Meg replied:

> *It's a different style of approach, for example, the American system caters towards the SAT exam whereas the Lebanese system caters towards the Lebanese official exams. That's where the students fall into a gap because the types of questions that are asked are completely different, for example SAT stresses on critical reading like to get into AUB, you need to be proficient in critical reading and maths. (Meg, April 2009)*

She identified the SAT questions, especially those of the critical reading part, as the most challenging and the skills needed to address these questions are not met in the school syllabus. She also commented that the vocabulary is very complex and challenging for students, which in turn makes it a demoralising experience for both teachers and students alike. Meg concludes that the only way to overcome this on-going strain on students is to begin preparing students in their earlier years, starting at intermediate level.

Bianca teaches in the two different cycles and spoke about the shifts of attitude towards the English subject. She reported that the content of English in Brevet classes is revolted against due to its unchallenging nature because in grade 8 learners are more exposed to a literature-based syllabus where they get to enjoy poetry, literary texts and authentic articles that are much more appealing. Similarly, in grade 10 learners are taught to a literature-based syllabus and then in grade 11 (science stream) it shifts to another type of curriculum that strictly caters for official exams with two periods of English per week. Bianca reported that these shifts in English curricula between the cycles have had a profound impact on learners' attitudes and motivations in both exiting cycles:

> *I teach both grade 8 and grade 9 and I sense the difference between the joy they get out of using American published books that contain rich literature and challenges the students in grade 8, and the local Lebanese published book that is dry and monotonous that strictly caters for passing the year 9, Brevet. (Bianca, April 2009)*

5.9.2 Lack of Time

As suggested above, both teachers expressed concerns about time constraints. Neither was adverse to utilising time for exam preparation, but stated that since their priority was to adequately prepare the students for the official exams there simply was no time to devote to anything extra, particularly as they both reported that the number of English periods was being reduced as students progressed into secondary schooling.

5.9.3 Adapting to Change

When asked what they did to balance what was expected of them and what they knew students needed as part of their teaching, both Bianca and Meg reported that they had begun to incorporate more questions and task types based on those found in SAT and TOEFL exams into both mini quizzes and everyday class activities. This was done in order to give the students more practice in answering the specific question types likely to be encountered in the proficiency tests and SAT.

Meg and Bianca reported being fairly familiar with TOEFL but were less so with SAT. Neither reported receiving any professional development in exam preparation for either exam. The implication of this was that Meg and Bianca felt they had to spend quite a lot of time familiarising themselves with the various question types involved.

> *I have had to spend hours searching for vocabulary items that were new to me and getting answers ready to the complicated questions before entering class. (Bianca, April 2009)*

While many types of questions were familiar to them, there were a number with which they are less familiar. They commented on the general lack of resources available to produce some of the same kinds of material that are found in some of the exams. One example of this that was given was the creation of the sorts of extensive vocabulary building activities to cater for the 3500 most frequently encountered on the SAT reading sections. The time taken to produce these was a concern.

5.9.4 Summary

Both English teachers recognised the issues and voiced concern about the dilemma faced by students. They reported, however, that it was difficult for them to meet the conflicting demands because of the priority given to the official exams and the time constraints in preparing for exams that were outside the school curriculum. Despite these difficulties the teachers had tried to implement some SAT and TOEFL test preparation in their classes.

5.10 'We have equipped them' – Head Teacher Interview Comments

Kamal has the responsibility to supervise, coordinate and report to the principal about the progress of these classes. He ensured that teachers and students alike are executing the set syllabus and doing sufficient mock exams prior to the due date of the national external examination administered by the MEHE. Kamal indicated that the principal relied almost entirely on his reporting and had little independent knowledge of what is actually happening in the English Department. It was strictly limited to the weekly meetings with the head teacher and classroom observations she conducts about once a month when she has time to do so. Kamal reported he had been hired by the school five years previously in an attempt to boost the results in official exams. In the past the literature-based curriculum was in place across all levels in the high school and this had not provided students with sufficient government exam models nor the type of results the school aimed for. He stated that students at CHS were not receiving very high marks in the official English exam as they were too absorbed in an American literary-based curriculum that entailed a different set of objectives.

> *Despite the rigorous curriculum in place at the moment, I still think that our students are capable of scoring the needed results for entry into any university of their choice. We have equipped them with the needed skills and I know in the vocabulary they may be a little lacking, but those other skills they have obtained compensate and suffice. (Kamal, April 2009)*

However, Meg, the middle school and secondary teacher, points to past samples of the English official exam in their four different tracks (LS, GS, Humanities and Sociology, and Economics). Meg noticed that all four entail a similar framework and pattern: a reading selection of 400-600 words with a few interpretative and referential questions, a brief vocabulary section and a writing response of 300-450 words, for which 2-3 hours are allocated depending on the chosen track. However, to successfully complete one or more various university admission tests entailed much greater effort, sound language knowledge

and speed. Meg explained further that the SAT verbal section, for example, included three subtests: sentence completion and critical reading, usage and mechanics, and finally argumentative writing. The IBT, on the other hand, was divided into four sections: reading, listening, speaking and writing. Both exams ran for approximately four hours and required much perseverance. She added that the level of difficulty surpassed any of the GSC exams. Contrary to this opinion, Kamal comments:

> *Our students receive all that is needed to turn them into academic writers, using conventions appropriate to their audience, and are given writing assignments of high quality. That is enough to see them through. (Kamal, April 2009)*

The findings revealed that both Bianca and Meg spoke negatively about the Lebanese syllabus in place and how it conflicted with learners' needs. It also shaped influential attributes on how the teachers viewed themselves as teachers in their present context, particularly in the eyes of their students. Both teachers expressed they had values to profess as professionals but felt there were too many restrictions and constraints in the Lebanese curriculum that impeded their ability to adjust their teaching to the needs of the students. The Lebanese curriculum, according to the head teacher, Kamal, was used as a benchmark that gauged a sense of achievement or success in what teachers did and this was conveyed to the principal. Both Meg and Bianca expressed how they felt about themselves being teachers while being asked to adhere to a very rigid syllabus. Whether they saw themselves as failures or successes very much depended on the feedback they received from their students, but knew they had a head teacher to report to and a principal to please as well.

Vignette 4: Professionals have values to profess

Recounting an attempt to actively be involved in the decision making of syllabus development, Meg was once part of a committee at the school to recommend books and units to be included in the academic year. She recommended that themes be selected from the Literature-based text books published in America, yet included the literary and structural competencies similar to what was being used in grades 7, 8 and 10, as this challenged students and motivated them to learn English with greater enthusiasm and served their learning outcomes more effectively. Meg reported it was like "banging your head against a brick wall" because the head of English, Kamal, was benefiting from using the books published in Lebanon as he was the author of the prescribed books being used at the national external exam levels at school. Meg reported that the argument went against

her because, according to Kamal, students anticipating the external exam needed models of test types.

5.11 Principal's Perceptions of the English Curriculum

The principal, Nancy, has been principal at CHS since 1987. She is described as powerful and tenacious by many teachers at the school. She conducts regular meetings with staff and is open to new ideas so long as they do not go against her own beliefs. She reports to the owner/president of the school regularly (once a month) and mainly discusses financial matters and occasionally gives briefings about educational issues. She is very much dependent on administrative personnel and has much confidence in her teaching staff.

The interview with Nancy took place in her office and lasted approximately 30 minutes. The questions involved the curriculum, students' readiness for university and the kind of changes needed to make students better prepared for university entry. Nancy reported that the school implements the Lebanese content-based curriculum for English language teaching. However, its middle school programme opts for a curriculum based more on American literature as it seeks to strengthen learners' language skills. When asked why English sessions were being reduced at secondary level. Nancy stated that all students irrespective of their chosen stream are required to take English as one of their subjects. The LS and GS classes are allocated one period of English a week because there is more emphasis given to the science subjects. Science subjects, however, all had English as a medium for instruction. She added that the Humanities class is assigned six periods of English a week because the course undertaken by students in this track is not the same as that undertaken by the science-intensive streams. It is a more literature-orientated course with a wider range of themes to explore. When questioned about the English program at CHS, she alluded to the importance of addressing the needs and goals of its students and how the curriculum in place is, ironically, hampering this. She constantly pointed to the flaws of the curriculum, and reiterated how the Lebanese Baccalaureate did not serve the needs of learners, particularly in English. She claimed that people on the ministerial education committee were politically affiliated and had no idea what was in the interest of future students. She said the committee was corrupt and needed to be obliterated.

Other subjects are important but not included in the programme ... As far as language is concerned we are decreasing the periods instead of increasing them and all the time we have to give way but the main things are the languages are very important. (Nancy, May 2009)

When asked about the degree to which the school as a private school needs to align with the Lebanese curriculum, Nancy pointed to the numerous demanding subjects in place in the final year at high school and how it is virtually impossible to add or alter any because they are all important for the overall achievement. She added that while she aspired to add other extra curricula subjects, the school is traditionally measured and has a reputation for its success rate on official exams.

As a private school, because the Lebanese curriculum has so many subjects, we don't have free periods to do other things. We would like to have drama and music classes, but we only have athletic activities and this is not enough; if we want to change we cannot because we have to cover all the material in the curriculum. Success on official exams is what draws parents and students to enrol at our school. (Nancy, May 2009)

Moreover, when alluding to the students' need to attend American-style universities upon leaving school, which involved sitting for the SAT and English proficiency tests such as TOEFL and EEE, and how students expected the English programme to prepare them for these tests, Nancy presumed that all those that sought entry into AUB and LAU were granted admission without any trouble.

Now for the time being all of them are being accepted, just now I was looking at the application form for a student whose average is 65[in English which is just a passing] and she is third in this class and has been accepted at LAU, everyone who is not accepted at AUB is accepted at LAU, now why? Because at LAU maybe they take an average on the government certificate. [Just conjecture] (Nancy, May 2009)

She saw the school's objective as being to enable the students to achieve the best that they are able to, regardless of whether they aspire to attend university or which university they hope to enter. She felt that by providing the students with comprehensive courses in English, that this should prepare them equally well for any English exam, be it the Lebanese Baccalaureate English exam, the IELTS, the TOEFL, the EEE, the SAT English test or any other

proficiency exam. She did, however, concede that the skills needed to succeed in each of the various exams were slightly different, but said that it may not be possible to adequately prepare the students for each of the exams. She further stated that exam preparation courses that had been run in the past had tended to be poorly attended and that the students who did attend seemed not to take the courses seriously. It was obvious from the interview that the principal planned to deepen her understanding of these standardised tests and make adjustments to the syllabus so these exams are treated with greater concern for future students' needs. There was a feeling that for the students who were better at English additional preparation courses would probably not be strictly necessary. For students whose English was not as good, but who had expectations of being able to study at an American-style university where English is the medium of instruction and which required a high score on one of the mentioned exams, a number of external test preparation courses is available to students and it was observed by Nancy that to some extent the students who wanted to take these exams could participate in these courses. That said, the school principal was not averse to running exam preparation courses if there was a sufficient number of students who expressed an interest in such courses and if teachers were available to run them.

She admitted towards the end of the interview that she did not possess adequate information about the requirements of entry into American-style private universities in Lebanon and wished to develop this knowledge immediately. When asked about how much she knew about these tests, she responded:

> *Actually I don't know much about these tests; this is a weakness. I wish to further my knowledge by reading more about these exams (Nancy, May 2009)*

Overwhelmingly, the responses given by the principal clearly showed that she did not share the same aspirations in terms of meeting students' interests and needs at a time when the changing requirements for entry into American-style universities was educationally allowable within a nation that sets its own standards and benchmarks for entry. Consequently, the GSC becomes of less importance to those students and teachers whose learning needs and teaching goals respectively contrast with the current curriculum in place. The above clearly points to the different ways secondary teachers and executive respond to and accommodate the changing language requirements of American-style universities.

5.12 Research Diary and other Documents

The findings show that common themes emerged from the notes jotted down and the documents collected at different intervals. The research diary highlighted significant points made by students and teachers during the informal chats and gatherings around the school and university grounds. The notes pointed to different patterns that were categorised into common themes and issues. The informal talks revealed significant data fuelled with emotional and rational appeals that wished for immediate attention. Students and teachers spoke more openly about their concerns when they were presented with the opportunity to communicate in an informal setting. For instance, many students reported, without hesitation, dissatisfaction with their school program and teachers' focus on test drilling for the national external exam. The teachers gave their genuine opinions about the syllabus and expressed their concerns as classroom teachers because they did not appreciate the constraints and limitations imposed on them as teachers. The informal setting gave them the freedom to be more open about their concerns.

The documents collected from CERD, the school and universities constituted insightful data about why the teachers were restricted to a syllabus that merely catered for the Lebanese Baccalaureate with objectives pertaining to the national curriculum. The findings revealed a conflict with the learning outcomes needed to gain admission into American-style universities. The model tests showed the variation of question types and skills needed for success at university. Analysis of the documents revealed a pattern of themes that served to categorise issues into distinct headings such as national external exam objectives, entry language requirements, national educational plan and the Americanising of education. The research diary and other documents revealed invaluable data that helped me to analyse and gain a deeper understanding of the context under study.

5.13 Summary of the Findings

The data from Mohanad, Carmen and Liza, the admission officers, indicated that the shift to SAT at AUB and LAU was more of an external decision rather than a local one due to the affiliations both have in terms of educational philosophy, standards and practices with the American liberal arts model of higher education. HCU had reservations about using the SAT as an entrance language proficiency exam, but replicates the AUB and LAU models. Both AUB and LAU administrators concluded that it was more about obtaining and sustaining accreditation by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Associations of

Colleges and Schools in America which happens approximately once every eight years. Hence, in a more global setting higher education institutions have a greater number of sources of finance and they need autonomy and academic freedom to be both intra- and inter-globally effective.

Salma and Paul, the CERD officials in charge of curriculum development and school book publications used in all public and some private sectors, expressed their contentment with the national curriculum and said that it served the needs of students and teachers in the public sector, and did not see their responsibility extending to the private sector. A paper from the National Centre for Educational Research and Development (NCERD, 2001-2002) reported that the number of schools as of 2008-2009 (when this study was being devised) was 2698, of which 35.9% were private schools, 13.7% free private schools and 50.4% public schools, with 48.4% of Lebanese students attending private schools, 12.6% free private schools and 39% public schools. The private sector therefore accounted for 61% of schools, including mid-private schools largely funded by religious and charitable organisations.

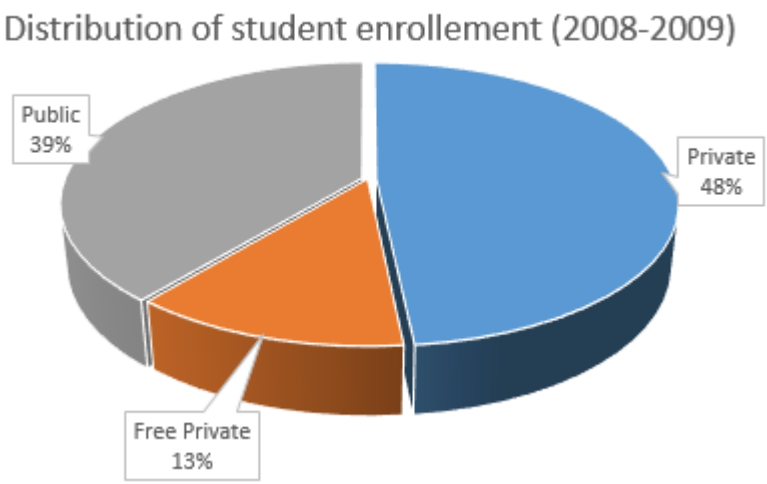

Figure 5.3: Distribution of student enrolment (2008-2009)

Salma's and Paul's concerns were more with the state secondary schools and general universities. Their reticence to comment on private schools and universities was understandable. They did not comment on the impact that changes in the private universities and schools might be having on the state system.

The six tertiary students provided insights into their experience prior to entry into the chosen university and expressed dissatisfaction with the school's inflexibility and failure to accommodate their university needs. Much criticism was directed towards the national

curriculum and how it obstructed teachers from providing learners with adequate knowledge to take exams like the SAT and IBT. Many expressed the view that the English competencies acquired during secondary schooling did not demonstrate a level of English consistent with the demands of a university programme nor did it allow them to meet the language requirements in a university entrance exam. The question emerges to what extent secondary schooling can and should prepare students for tertiary English study.

Interviews and survey data from secondary students at school showed similar concerns. These students reported being caught between focusing on a school program which prepares them for the official exam and a university entry exam which determines a place at a tertiary institute. Fundamentally, students expressed greater concern about the SAT than about the traditional Lebanese Baccalaureate. Irrespective of the specialised track they were in, most students expressed the need for a more flexible syllabus catering for learners' needs at school and beyond. Some reported lacking motivation to learn and commit to the school programme aligned with the national external exam requirements. A common theme in interviews was the reported feeling of frustration and concern about the financial and time burdens of SAT and other exam preparation.

Findings from English teachers indicated that they were aware of the conflicting situation students were placed in but they reported the constraints of their own position, having to focus on the prescribed syllabus and meeting the demands of their superiors. Thus, the relationship teachers have with a curriculum, and those things that support the curriculum, such as textbooks and other learning materials, hold different meanings and importance for those interacting with them, depending on how they have been presented and explained by others within the same context. Teachers expressed reservations at the impact of tests like the SAT/TOEFL at multiple levels: implanting ideology, standards and teaching at certain levels may serve to rob teachers of the best part of their time on the job – creative interactive time with students as they discuss and inquire into issues and problems that command authentic interest (Brosio, 2003). In light of this, a number of questions concerning both the meaningfulness and magnitude of the relationship between TOEFL/SAT exams and the language syllabus the majority of private schools incorporate in Lebanon come to surface. Although teachers knew that their teaching goals conflicted with learners' needs, they clearly explained that they did very little to modify those goals merely because this went against the school policy and syllabus in place. They had to weekly report to their head teacher and prove they were covering the chapters and core materials of the course/subject they were

teaching. The implications of the SAT and other standardised tests impacted on students' motivation and attitude toward learning and this in turn demoralised the teachers.

The principal had a different outlook and believed the school's reputation was built on the result ratings of the external exams in all three streams. This was what drew parents to enrol their children at a particular school like CHS. She did not think it was the responsibility of the school to prepare students for entry into university as this would require much teaching time, and due to an already demanding schedule, the school had neither the resources nor the staff to cater for these needs. However, she alluded to a possibility of running after school sessions for students interested in taking a standardised test, but did not really show that she knew what these exams entailed and where the gaps were. The principal relied solely on the reports provided to her by the head of English and the feedback received by students' parents.

While the decision on the number of required English language classes rests with the MoE, the actual content of classes is largely at the discretion of the curriculum development decision makers within the school which the principal and the head of English oversee. Whilst she realised that more could be done to maximise the effectiveness of English lessons during secondary schooling, she resigned herself to the fact that the external exam results were good and concluded that there was no need to attempt to change.

The research diary and documents provided important data for this study and revealed why the changing entry requirements into university are impacting the main stakeholders. Applicants have to attach their SAT scores, particularly those who wish to commence study in the fall semester of the following year. Each student is responsible for registering and taking the SAT alone without any assistance from the school he/she is attending. Applicants applying for the fall semester must take the SAT by the December testing session of the year before their planned enrolment. Year 12 students wishing to enrol in the upcoming fall semester at AUB or LAU had only the November and December test sessions to achieve the scores needed for admission. Excluding any data linked to Year 12 and the GSC (General Secondary Certificate), better known as the Baccalaureate Certificate, for admission raises questions about its traditional function and the curriculum in place at the private school. The current curriculum, being geared towards preparation for the Lebanese Baccalauréat, ignores the fact that such preparation for students deprives them of the opportunity to engage in a richer and more needed syllabus that caters for life-long learning and, to say the least, university expectations.

To sum up, Lebanese secondary and tertiary sectors have traditionally been diverse with differences according to class, religion and parental/family income. The differences between secondary and tertiary sectors and the diversity within each sector make the issue of university entry a complex one. In many ways testing and assessment reflect the political and social contexts in which they exist. Lebanese students' motivation for learning English as a second language as opposed to learning French, for example, are presumably largely shaped by their family's religious and political affiliations. The export of educational institutions and the linking of institutions from different countries generally represented a union of unequals (Kerr, 2001). In almost all cases, the institution from the outside dominated the local institution, or the new institution was based on foreign ideas and no indigenous values. Indeed, it is perhaps because of being deeply embedded in the process of globalisation that the diversity of discourses and practices of education found in Lebanon cannot but raise compelling questions (Altbach & Selvaratnam, 1989).

Chapter Six – Discussion of Findings

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented key findings from interviews with secondary and tertiary students, teachers, an English co-ordinator, a school principal and government exam and curriculum personnel. The findings suggest that tertiary entry for exiting high school students in Lebanon is increasingly problematic, and the pressures facing these students and schools are compounded by increasing competition for admission to prestigious universities. Exiting high school students from the private sector in Lebanon are faced with challenges in meeting university entry requirements due to perceived disjunctions with the secondary school curriculum and lack of information about and access to preparation for the entry tests. Furthermore, teachers report being pressured into meeting students' learning needs when required to teach a constrained curriculum that does not align with student tertiary entry desires. Several issues emerge from the findings that will be explored in this chapter:

- Growing impact of globalisation on higher education in Lebanon;
- Shifts in tertiary entry;
- Changes in the secondary school system;
- Scale and nature of these changes;
- Dilemmas facing CHS and other private secondary schools in how to respond;
- Impacts on stakeholders such as the dilemma for students and their families, teacher 'accountability' and the role of the principal as educational leader; and
- Implications for CERD.

6.2 Globalisation and the Tertiary System in Lebanon

The findings highlight the impact of globalisation on Lebanese secondary and tertiary education. Chapter 3, the Literature Review, explored the constructs of 'globalisation', 'internationalisation' and 'marketisation'. Globalisation is generally seen as the flow of technology, communications and knowledge, markets and people across borders (Altbach, 2004; Kritz, 2006; Marginson, 2006; Marginson & Van Der Wende, 2007; Welch, 2002). The flow is not just economic but lies in "the combination of global transformations in political economy with global transformations in communications and culture" (Marginson, 2006, p. 5). The term globalisation may only have entered the English language in the 1930s and been popularised by McLuhan as the "global village" but the process of globalisation

itself has been in existence for centuries, particularly in Lebanon. Emigration and mobility have been central to the history of Lebanon: an estimated 14 million people of Lebanese background have settled in Brazil and other countries; this compares with the 4.3 million present population of Lebanon (World Bank, 2010). Historically, globalisation in Lebanon has also been central to Lebanese education and the history of colonialism. The primary and secondary systems were begun by French missionaries and the first universities were established by Americans. The recent growth in the importance of globalisation, however, is evident in Lebanon with the increasing number of secondary and tertiary students studying abroad and the increasing competition for students and places in local universities and schools.

The following sections explore the different impacts of globalisation and the ways in which existing inequalities at tertiary and secondary school levels have become entrenched and new barriers to access erected.

6.2.1 Positive and Negative Aspects

Some positive effects of globalisation, as highlighted in the research literature, are evident in the Lebanese educational system, such as the 'level playing field' of the internet and scientific communities and access to research knowledge and global education (Altbach, 2004). Two of the universities are in the top 100 in the Shanghai Jiao Tong (SJTIHE) list. Several Lebanese universities have grown to provide academic leadership throughout the Arabic-speaking region, attracting students from other countries.

This mobility is mirroring to some extent what is happening in the European Union with Bologna and related initiatives. And it is not merely restricted to students. The increase in teacher mobility was also evident in this study. One of the teachers involved in this study had lived and been educated in other countries, and was now bringing that experience and expertise back. She has been teaching at Castle High School for seventeen years but was raised in Australia and completed her primary and high schooling in Victoria. The increase in global travel and migration has meant that Lebanon is now a receiver of teachers and students from the diaspora, something which has had an impact at many levels of education.

There is, however, evidence of the differential distribution of the benefits of globalisation. Two thirds of the universities in the 'superleague' of the top 100 list are in English-speaking countries, with 53 of the top 100 and 17 of the top 20 in the world located in the U.S.

Becoming part of the global marketplace in education has also entrenched inequalities. Inequity can be seen in the one-way flow of students, the international 'brain drain'. The U.S. has a doctoral enrolment of over 102,000 international students (Altbach, 2004). The sharing of the benefits of globalisation is thus asymmetrical (Marginson & Van der Wende, 2007). AUB and LAU in Lebanon are the only two universities to figure in world rankings of tertiary institutions and have the most prestige in the diverse Lebanese system. AUB ranked 734 and LAU ranked 2327 in 2014 (www.rankinguniversities.com). It is through this status that the American influence in the Lebanese tertiary system has become established, reflecting the political dominance of the U.S.

6.2.2 Shifting Entry Requirements

The issues for universities emerging from this study are that the 'pecking order' of universities has become more pronounced with the high-prestige institutions linked much more to global ranks and standards, and that the pressures on these and other universities to meet a broader range of students and student expectations is greater. Lebanese universities in the private sector have been keen to replicate U.S. programmes and offer U.S.-equivalent and accredited degrees. The higher ranking universities have also strengthened their ties with institutions in the U.S. and Canada.

Traditionally in Lebanon tertiary entry to English-speaking universities has differentiated between language proficiency and achievement. For instance, a student may have achieved a high score on the Lebanese Baccalaureate, but may not have the adequate language proficiency to gain entry into an English speaking university. IELTS and TOEFL and other international tests were accepted as evidence of language proficiency. However, in the past decade the shift from TOEFL/IELTS to primarily SAT has meant more pressure on exiting secondary students. Concomitantly, a global commercial testing industry has established itself inside EFL assessment, trading in a specific product, the SAT, as an entry requirement into American-style universities in Lebanon. Duran et al. (1985) found that overall SAT scores were lower for people whose first language was not English, even when they indicated that English was their best language. Thus far, the Lebanese Baccalaureate and more recently the International Baccalaureate have been the main qualifications accepted as evidence of school/academic achievement.

The interview findings indicate that pressure on universities to compete on an international footing and to be more integrated with and accepted by American-style institutions led to the

adoption of the SAT, and that the introduction of the SAT and other changes in tertiary entry requirements are entrenching the existing gap between secondary and tertiary education. This gap is a worldwide issue and has always been a key problem in Lebanon because of the different origins of both systems, particularly when the national curriculum does not align with the globalised aspirations of most private universities in Lebanon. The findings from this study clearly show that the Lebanese Baccalaureate can no longer be considered the entry qualification into private elite universities. U.S. universities also function as a framework for institutional development and self-evaluation. The standards are fully updated at least every seven years, with the participation of member institutions, to reflect the Commission's heightened emphases and to anticipate future directions of the higher education community. At the five-year point in that cycle, AUB and LAU undergo a mid-course revision, with changes and clarifications based on the experience of institutions and the Commission in using the standards. The recent developments in university entry requirements by these institutions indicate a shift from exams such as EEE and TOEFL to the SAT. The SAT has become the benchmark standardised assessment of the critical reading, mathematical and scientific reasoning, and writing skills students have developed over time. It is rapidly becoming a core requirement in Lebanon at most American-style universities. AUB and LAU also receive accreditation from the Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). This fact indicates that the universities will need to comply with the standards and policies this body sets forth. This body is recognised by the U.S. Department of Education and is considered one of the six regional accrediting bodies in the U.S. In this way, a test that was developed and validated for native-speakers in the U.S. for entry to American universities is now being used for non-English background speakers in the Middle East. This has come about because the two universities are striving to internationalise themselves and to 'open up' possibilities for their graduates. Hence, the impact has driven local private American-style universities to alter their admission process to meet international standards.

In some ways the choice of the SAT as an entry test seems a natural extension of this process. It is the most widely accepted test for entry to tertiary study in the U.S. and internationally. As discussed in Chapter 3, the evidence on the use of the SAT in the U.S. is that women and students from ethnic minority backgrounds score lower than average on the SAT (Bakker & Wolf, 2001; Isaacs, 2001). SAT does not align with the curriculum in different states and in areas such as Florida and Washington D.C., the SAT can be substituted for state exit exams (Keller, 2005). The use of the SAT in a country such as Lebanon is totally different. There is

no research into the use of SAT in countries where English is not the medium of instruction and very little research into the validity of the use of the SAT to gauge English language proficiency.

The conflict, therefore, between the SAT and the Lebanese Baccalaureate is much greater than between the SAT and school exit examinations in the U.S. Although interview data indicated that tertiary interviewees saw SAT as an English proficiency entry test, it is, in fact, an academic achievement test.

The introduction of the SAT is then different to having another English language proficiency test. Whereas the growth of IELTS and TOEFL has spawned the emergence of private coaching and tutoring for the tests, the introduction of the SAT has introduced the notion of remediation. If students do not have the required academic knowledge for gaining the pre-requisite SAT score, there needs to be subject-based teaching to 'bring them up to' this level. The gap between students and the test requirements is not seen in terms of the problems of the test and the use of an English-based achievement test for students in a non-English speaking country but rather the student body is constructed as needing remediation. The problem is shifted on to the test takers – the students. With the open admission policies in the majority of private universities in Lebanon, the discussion on the effect of remediation at universities in Lebanon is almost non-existent. Inter-university discussion among faculty about the scope, need and objectives of remedial or placement courses has raised important questions about what remedial programmes are doing to improve student academic performance (Mazzeo, 2002).

6.2.3 The Nature of the Changes: Internationalisation or Globalisation?

To what extent are these changes and the adoption of the SAT as entry requirement globalisation or internationalisation? Marginson (2006) pointed out that each term refers to different dimensions of cross-border human action, dimensions that have differing geo-spatial dynamics, and differing ones for transformation. Internationalisation means the expanding and strengthening of relationships conducted between nations – the impact of this is that institutions such as universities are strengthened but practices and national institutions remain essentially intact. Globalisation is seen by many researchers as the enhancement of worldwide or pan-European spheres of action. It is important to note that internationalisation implies the continued existence of national borders whereas globalisation seeks to erode

national borders. In other words, while globalisation might have a significant effect on nations, internationalisation might have a marginal one.

The introduction of the SAT in AUB, LAU and other American-style universities in Lebanon marks a structural change in which some universities see their role as regional and part of the international tertiary 'marketplace' rather than being part of a national system. Many universities in Lebanon, particularly AUB and LAU, are partners with American universities which adhere to a charter from the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York. They are aligned more with their American counterparts. The terms Americanisation and marketisation have also been used to describe this shift. The next section explores the downward impact on CHS and the independent secondary school sector in general.

6.3 Washback on Secondary Education

The secondary education system in Lebanon, established by the French in the 1920s, has also been undergoing rapid change. It is difficult to describe it as a unitary system because of the complex patchwork of government and independent schools. Private school enrolments are double the enrolments in public schools (CERD, 2005). These changes have tended not to be visible because of the lack of consistent and coherent data collection by central authorities; much of the information comes from newspaper reports as there is a dearth of research information (Vlaardingerbroek, Dallal, Rizkallah, & Rabah, 2007).

The Year 12 external examination, the Lebanese Baccalaureate, has already had to compete with the French and international Baccalaureates for several years. The international Baccalaureate, introduced in 1995, was given equivalence with the Lebanese Baccalaureate, and is offered in many independent schools; there are now also eight 'world IB' schools in Lebanon. The programme is in many ways integrated into the secondary system as schools offering the IB must be registered with the Ministry for Education and Higher Education (Vlaardingerbroek et al., 2007). More recently, 'American high school' programmes have been established at some private schools but students from these programmes can enter private universities as freshman and must therefore complete an extra year of study.

The introduction of the SAT at the two universities discussed in this study and consequently at other higher-prestige university has had flow-on effects to the secondary sector which seem to be changing the nature of the system. Recent newspaper reports suggest that in Lebanon many exiting high school students are opting to travel abroad upon completing their

secondary schooling phase (Daily Star, 2011). Many of the students interviewed in this study reported friends and relatives going abroad for study. The destinations, however, which were traditionally France, now tend to be the UK and the U.S. and, to a lesser extent, Australia, if students have relatives residing there. The findings from this study indicate that the introduction of the SAT has increased the barriers to university entry. One quarter of the students in this study were rejected for direct admission to their preferred university. Students reported frustration for their parents and themselves as re-registering for the exam came with additional costs in terms of exam fee and further coaching. It had both financial and psychological impacts on parents and students alike. Parents are reported to be sending their children to the U.S. during the summer for intensive SAT classes the year before graduating from high school so that they are prepared to take the exam in time prior to entry into university (Daily Star, 2008).

The differences in access to further study for lower SES students and for secondary students in Egypt and Lebanon have been highlighted in several studies (Lloyd, El Tawila, Clark, & Mensch, 2003; Vlaardingerbroek et al., 2007. Aspirations for tertiary study of Year 12 students in Lebanon are high but the cost of coaching and sitting for entry tests is prohibitive. Existing barriers for lower-SES students and those from government- or less prestigious private schools will become entrenched.

The impact of the SAT is different to that of the International Baccalaureate. Hill (2006) claims that the IB in Lebanon and across the Middle East is an example of internationalisation rather than globalisation. He argues that the flexibility of the curriculum aligns, supports and legitimises culturally and linguistically local systems. The enrolment in the IB is from other Arabic-speaking countries (Hill, 2006).

The SAT, however, involves a curriculum designed for the U.S. and delivered in English. There is little relationship, as identified in this study, between the SAT and the Lebanese Baccalaureate. The greatest impact may be, however, the strengthening of the coaching industry. The findings reveal the time spent on SAT preparation at the cost of high school work as being a detrimental consequence of the test. Students reported that due to insufficient and inefficient preparation for the exam via school tutoring, many have had to resort to taking additional courses and the exam several times before achieving the required score. The data suggests that the effects of coaching and registering for the exam may be a potential source of bias, as students from affluent backgrounds may have greater opportunity and access to preparation materials and courses. This need to succeed places much pressure on the less

privileged students whose parents are already struggling to cover the tuition of a costly education at a private school. Hence, the means of providing access to tertiary places is increasingly a contested issue privileging the richer students. In many countries this has led to two distinct systems of education and the entrenchment of a private, for-profit tutoring system. This has happened in South Korea, Japan and Cambodia (Dawson, 2010). In Greece, the system of 'cram schools' in the private coaching colleges (frontisterio) is called 'shadow' or 'parallel' education. Parents spend more than the state does on secondary school in preparing for university (Psacharopoulos & Papaconstantinou, 2005). The system of private tutoring maintains and exacerbates inequalities (Bray, Mazawi, & Sultana, 2013). It limits the innovation and flexibility of mainstream education because of the need to compete with teaching/learning practices in the 'shadow' system (Kassotakis & Verdis, 2013).

Recent developments have taken 'Americanisation' to another level in Lebanon. The shift to the SAT use in a non-English speaking context as a tertiary entry requirement is a concern for many teachers and students alike in the private sector. The use of this English language achievement test in the Lebanese context raises questions of the entrenchment of inequality because of the differential access to English and the ability to prepare for the test. This has meant that only those with access to personal coaching and enough resources can gain access to such universities.

The findings in this study indicate that the introduction of the SAT and the establishment of the coaching industry may have real impacts on teachers and students in higher-SES schools such as CHS. How can the secondary system in Lebanon with its patchwork of government and private schools respond to this structural change? To what extent is equality of access for mid- to low-SES students something of the past?

The following section discusses the impact on teachers, addressing the question 'To what extent can they respond to the changes?'

6.4 Teachers' Sphere of Action

The question arises of teachers' flexibility and whom they are accountable to: the students and their families, the curriculum, the school, the profession? Where do teachers stand when these responsibilities are in conflict? The increase in pressure to teach English as Foreign Language (EFL), and the privatisation of education, are two issues discussed in the education literature which are more apparent in Lebanon than in other Arab countries (Diab, 2005).

The findings from this study show that teachers seek to accommodate the needs of learners and the needs of the curriculum although this goal is more than often problematic. The English teacher in the secondary phase at CHS is unable to devote enough classroom time to facilitate the effective acquisition of the skills required to be able to do well in the SAT. Two teachers interviewed questioned the value of a focus on university test preparation and its appropriateness for all of the students. Both teachers argued that, for the most part, they had a responsibility to address the needs of the range of students, not only those with high expectations. Teachers' focus only on those wishing to attend prestigious universities and primarily addressing their needs, would exclude others who may not be given the opportunity to achieve all that they possibly could. They felt that the introduction of the SAT and other standardised tests marginalise the local educational needs and were unsure of how schools can cope with these challenges. This confirms international research into the constraining impact of coaching colleges and private tutoring on mainstream schools (Bray et al., 2013). The teachers in this study were in the 'front line'. Student data indicated that students and their families blamed their English teachers for not preparing them for the SAT and other tertiary entry tests. The teachers understood this but were also constrained by their having to prepare students for the Lebanese Baccalaureate. There was also their professionalism and commitment as teachers to provide students with a broader education that prepared them for life and career and developed their broader potential. The impact of the SAT and tertiary entry can thus be seen as undermining the professionalism of teachers and their ability to work for longer-term goals. They realised that they were being pressured into 'training/tutoring' rather than educating. To what extent can teachers meet both sets of expectations? The next section looks at the conflict between the Baccalaureate English requirements and English language proficiency needed for tertiary entry.

6.5 Examining the Exams: The Baccalaureate and its Impact on Students

The challenge that secondary schools face to meet government curriculum requirements alongside their students' entry to tertiary education is a worldwide one, but it is particularly problematic in Lebanon as shown in the findings (Bray et al., 2013).

In answer to questions on the effectiveness of the secondary English curriculum, students in the Life Science and General Science streams reported that the English acquired did not meet their needs, particularly because only two periods of English were allotted to their syllabus. This lack of attention to English meant primarily focusing on the official exam and ignoring areas of proficiency and study skills that students needed in preparation for university entry

tests. Although the national external exam may have served its purpose in the science subjects, there was much reported dissatisfaction in the English subject.

Mandatory external exit exams are a high-stakes barrier for high school completion, and this fact makes the path to university more controversial. Because private schools are evaluated on both student achievement and high school completion, the test imposes a *de facto* standard that all students are expected to achieve. It becomes a constraint on the curriculum for students, particularly those who might prefer an alternative curriculum that recognises the need to go beyond the preparation for the Lebanese Baccalaureate.

Indeed, it is difficult to see why many Year 12 students in Lebanon should feel motivated to do well in their terminating secondary school studies, given that the major decisions about their transition to higher education will be made on the strength of their earlier schooling and their performance in non-curriculum-related tests, and all they have to do is attain a minimum pass in the final external examination. The Baccalauréat Français, the International Baccalaureate and the SAT exemplify the elite foreign actors in the Lebanese educational theatre whereas the Lebanese Baccalaureate is increasingly viewed as a bureaucratic imposition emanating from a government education sector that serves the lower socio-economic classes – those who cannot afford prestigious private education. The fear of failure on the SAT and being rejected by the university places much pressure on the students and their families. Some even experience times of despair because of the stress and anxiety.

6.5.1 Sources of Stress

Stress is an increasing issue in secondary and tertiary student lives (Rotenberg, 2002). Lebanon is not unusual in the pressures being placed on students as they move from secondary to tertiary study. The findings from this study, however, indicate that there is little recognition of the impact of these structural changes on students. If a test is regarded as important, if the stakes are high, preparation for it can come to dominate all teaching and learning activities. If the test content and testing techniques are at variance with the objectives of the course, there is likely to be harmful backwash. Davies (1968) argued that "the good test is an obedient servant since it follows and apes the teaching" (p. 5). The opposite was true of the students who sought to take the SAT because this was an exam that did not align with a specific high school curriculum per se. In data collected during student meetings in the playground, students willingly opened up to issues and concerns that either coincided or conflicted with the one-on-one interviews. Much of what they said fell in line

with the arguments concerning insufficient information about the kind of universities that are available and their entry requirements and why the school did not provide enough support to prospective exiting students at school. They openly discussed their anxiety and frustration about the SAT and why such a demanding exam is not treated with more concern by the school. In other words, many deplored the negligence and ignorance of teachers whose knowledge of the university entry exams was very rudimentary.

Students remarked that the SAT had to be taken three to four times before attaining a satisfactory result. They commented on the level of difficulty, particularly the complex vocabulary incorporated in the reading passages. Students had negative feelings about the SAT and this mainly resulted in the inflexibility exercised by the school. Students expressed dismay and disappointment at having to independently prepare for a high-stakes exam without the guidance and help of their teachers and school particularly at such a decisive learning phase in their schooling.

6.6 The Principal as Manager, not Leader: 'Learning Does Not Happen without Leadership'

To what extent can principals and school boards respond to changing requirements and expectations from parents and students? The findings from the interview with the principal indicate that Nancy responds more as a manager than a leader. When questioned about the English programme at CHS, she alluded to the importance of addressing the needs of students and how the curriculum in place is, ironically, hampering this. She constantly pointed to the flaws of the curriculum, and reiterated how the Lebanese Baccalaureate did not serve the needs of the learners, particularly in English. She claimed that people on the Ministerial Education Committee were politically aligned and had no idea what was in the interest of future students. She said that the Committee was corrupt and needed to be abolished. Despite these views, Nancy was constrained in making changes to serve the needs of students and teachers. She had to report to her superior, the owner, and president of the school, even though in the interview she sometimes stated she had absolute authority to act and implement changes that served the interest of the school. The fragmentation of the tertiary system puts far greater pressures on the school leaders in a decentralised system such as that in Lebanon. The challenge for principals in this environment is to be aware of the broader changes and to start thinking about the relations between external regulations and internal culture. In private schools especially, the principal must take account of the local community and the shifts in the rapidly growing global market. Ball and Maroy (2009) argued for the role of the

principals as mediators and compromisers between internal dynamics and external constraints and pressures. To what extent do principals have room to move, a sphere of influence that enables them to meet the expectations and demands of parents, students, universities and the secondary curriculum? Nancy tended to underestimate the flexibility and leadership she could have exercised. This situation, however, foregrounds the pressures that principals and education leaders are under in the changing system. The principal had an obligation to meet the requirements set by the Ministry of Education represented by CERD, but also had the freedom to adopt other syllabi that served the needs of her learners. The decentralisation of schooling that is occurring in many OECD countries at present will only exacerbate the pressures and responsibilities for principals to meet these conflicting needs.

6.7 Implications for CERD

The problem for curriculum bodies in this context is how to ensure that learners in both public and private sectors can achieve an education that caters for purposes beyond the national external exams. The choice made by CERD, the body responsible for developing curricula for both public and private schools and for running in-service training for teachers at public schools, was very much about how the English curriculum can serve the students' aspirations beyond high school. In response to a question about tertiary entry, one of the interviewees stated that most students attending state schools are given the opportunity to develop skills that would cater for entry into state universities and even other private institutes depending on their financial capabilities. He did not refer to the more prestigious universities AUB and LAU. His responses indicate that he may see the mission of CERD primarily as national, catering for the public sector more than the private high schools.

Although private schools in Lebanon have the liberty of designing and carrying out their own syllabus, it is mandatory that they prepare their students for government exams at Brevet and the terminal classes. Because of this, private schools generally have parallel curricula in place only at those two crucial exiting levels. Moreover, the status of the Lebanese Baccalaureate as the mediator of the secondary-to-tertiary transition has become somewhat dubious. While the attainment of the Baccalaureate (or a recognised equivalent) is a legal requirement for entry to undergraduate study, the level of academic achievement can count for nothing owing to the timing of the examination in the summer immediately preceding the new university year, as by then students will already have applied for entry to university (acceptances at that stage being conditional upon attainment of the Baccalaureate).

Although the data in this study was limited to interviews with two CERD officials, it is of concern that they constructed the 'divide' as being between state and private schools. They felt little responsibility for students attending non-government schools. Such an attitude is understandable as is their support for lower-SES students in terms of a more holistic education. By narrowing their concerns to government schools and state universities, however, they are accepting as a *fait accompli* the entrenchment of a two tier system of education at secondary and tertiary levels. They are accepting a lesser role for the state in the provision of education for all.

6.8 How to Test the Tests

In the discussion so far little attention has been given to test makers and test users of the SAT. In much of the traditional research into testing the focus was on the paper test, its validity and reliability, and then on test takers. In recent years, however, the emphasis has shifted to exploring the responsibility of test makers and users. There is the construct of consequential validity (Messick, 1989) of proficiency or standardised testing that must be taken into account in any study of expected proficiency levels. The perceptions of test takers (before and after testing) need to be explored. Although the SAT has been relabelled as an 'assessment' test rather than a test of 'aptitude', it is still generally conceived as a test of academic aptitude. In considering an aptitude test, it is never a simple matter to declare it valid or not. It is also necessary to look at the strength of its predictive validity and to consider whether its predictive ability can be generalised across a range of situations. Comparably, Merrifield (2008) found that IELTS was used as a test for professional entry in seven countries. In the UK, EU rules prohibit language assessment of professionals by regulatory bodies, but eight out of ten professional associations required IELTS levels for entry. Wette and Basturkmen (2006) found those scores on IELTS and other standardised tests in no way guaranteed competent performance.

Because AUB sets the standards for other universities, most of the other tertiary institutes follow suit. Universities have used the tests as a predictor of academic success rather than a simple rating of English language proficiency. The washback effect of tests in creating a coaching industry has also led to the tests being questioned. To what extent are tests responsible for the ways in which they are used? The introduction of the SAT further compounds the problems. For the SAT to be used as a proficiency test only raises questions about its purpose. This problem is not unique to Lebanon. The use of tests as coverall gate keeping mechanisms shifts the responsibility for university support of learning, developing

language and academic learning skills to the users, to the secondary schools and teachers. Such a situation also brings into question the extent to which developers and promoters of SAT, IELTS and TOEFL must take responsibility. Although a great number of studies have been conducted on the effect of the tests in different contexts, little attention has been given to the high-stakes university entrance exams in Lebanon.

6.9 Summary of the Discussion

Lebanon is not unusual in the pressures being placed on students as they move from secondary to tertiary study. The problem is that the impact of these structural changes have not been explored or taken into account. The structural issue in many countries is that there are few tertiary places for many students, but this does not apply to Lebanon as much – the problem here is that the implications of changes in two universities in particular are having major impacts on a wide range of students due to a rigorous exam like the SAT designed to test critical thinking skills rather than language proficiency. Teachers at CHS saw the need to have two syllabi in place to meet the learning outcomes of two distinct objectives: learners' post-secondary schooling needs and meeting learning competencies set by the Ministry of Education (MoE).

The ability and commitment of the teachers were also very important: their own level of English, the amount and type of training they had received, the amount of teaching experience they had, and their own beliefs about language and education. Both English teachers reported that they found it very hard to teach SAT material due to its structural prejudices and language complexities. This study argues that international standardised tests such as SAT/TOEFL exams continue to impact on secondary students, teachers and other stakeholders and this raises questions about the current education system in Lebanon. Therefore, policy makers, such as those in CERD, need to readdress the attitudes reflected in students and teachers in the private sector so their learning goals are not impeded by English programmes that do not meet their aspirations. Furthermore, private universities in Lebanon, especially those highly regarded as the most distinguished in the nation, need to bridge the existing gap between secondary and tertiary transitions.

The impacts of globalisation on the Lebanese educational system have been problematic. The findings in this study indicate that the traditional disconnection between the French-based secondary and American-established tertiary systems has become greater. The gap has widened. The local Baccalaureate has not responded to changes and is reported as becoming

increasingly irrelevant to all except students aiming for ‘lower prestige’ universities or other local careers. The International Baccalaureate is gaining importance as well as international tests such as SAT and IELTS. Hill (2006) pointed to the fact that most national schools – private or state – have a preponderance of students from the culture found in the country. In Lebanon, IB programmes would still be attractive to the elite families because the programmes ensure that children could improve their English and would thus be qualified to attend universities in North America, the UK and Australia. International schools have greater capacity and are responding, albeit slowly, to these changes. Thus the international schools with strong English language education are becoming advantaged at the expense of local French medium and government schools. As a result, globalisation, with its focus on the English language and standardised tests, seems to be widening the gap between international schools whose foreign values may conflict with the local ones in place.

Chapter Seven – Conclusions and Recommendations

To what extent is using the SAT for entry into American-style private universities affecting the Lebanese Anglophone private secondary school system? This question has underpinned the whole study exploring the stakeholders' perceptions of the nexus between secondary schooling and university entry in the private sector. The study adopted a qualitative approach involving a case study of one private school and drawing on interview data from a range of stakeholders: teachers, school principal, curriculum designers, university admission officers, and students themselves. The study found that the majority of students and teachers felt that the SAT and other English standardised entry tests did not align with material covered at the external exam phase at school and thus this disjunction was having a range of impacts at system and school levels and particularly increasing pressure on students and teachers.

The literature review placed this question in a broader set of issues reviewing research relating to areas such as the role of globalisation in higher education and its global English language impact on universities in Lebanon. Research into the links between external national exams, standardised tests and entry into higher education was reviewed. The methodology chapter explored the research methodology and strategies which were most appropriate to these questions. This chapter brings together the key findings presented and the issues explored in the discussion chapter, returning to the questions outlined in Chapter 4. It also explores the implications of the findings in making recommendations emerging from the study.

7.1 Emergent Concerns

The findings revealed a disjunction between what senior students and their school English teachers and school executive considered readiness for higher education. In the interviews conducted with various stakeholders, important concerns emerged about what constituted the transitional process from school into university.

The principal, for example, highlighted the importance of high achievement on national external exams and was concerned with sustaining the school image. She reported that parents and the owner of the school shared her views on the importance of the 100% success rate in the national government exams in all tracks (LS, GS, and Humanities) as evidence of outstanding achievement. The principal's perception of best practice was focused on the Lebanese Baccalaureate government exams. Whilst she realised that more could be done to

maximise the effectiveness of English lessons at secondary schooling, she was resigned to the fact that the external exam results were good and felt there was no need to make any attempts to change. As students progressed through their schooling in her school, the number of English classes decreased, particularly upon reaching senior study (Grade 12). The LS and GS classes were allocated two periods and Humanities five periods. Yet the greater number of students who sought entry into private American-style universities was in Science streams. Although the principal argued that the school's reputation was built on the results obtained on the national external exams, the students reported that minor emphasis was given to these results upon entering a private American-style university. The constraints under which she was operating – the pressures from owner/management, parents, and government – limited her perceived sphere of action, her awareness of the changes and her ability to respond to them.

Interview data from senior students foregrounded issues of preparation for the SAT and the importance of individual coaching and gaining information through friends and other channels. Student data showed resentment at the need to prepare independently for these high-stakes tertiary entry exams without the guidance and help of their teachers. They were also perhaps responding to a system where marketisation and competition had disrupted previously established pathways.

The findings showed teachers questioning their accountability and feeling torn between providing more support to students and meeting school and exam expectations. Despite the school enjoying relative autonomy and independence from adhering to any government program (apart from the Brevet in grade 9 and Baccalaureate in grade 12), the data reported illustrate the school and teachers had made or felt they could make little adjustment to meet the changing tertiary education context.

The disjuncture between students' learner needs in the private sector and the curriculum set by CERD shows conflicting interests. Public demands for more effective schools have placed growing attention on the influence of school leaders, primarily principals and assistant principals. The data from this study indicate that this issue had not yet been fully recognised or addressed at school level.

The picture emerging from this case study mirrors what is happening in many OECD countries and across the Middle East and Asia (Bray et al, 2013) The rapid impact of globalisation on education has meant an on-going conflict between national and international

curricula (Smith, 2003). An emerging problem observed in this study was senior students attending private schools who had English learning goals that did not match the ones designed by the government curriculum set by CERD. However, the national plan for educational reform points to meeting educational evaluation in school and official exams such that they meet the requirements of higher education and labour markets as reported in the *Plan for Educational Reform in Lebanon* prepared by CERD (1997). The change in entry to tertiary education, however, questions the extent to which the English acquired as part of the Lebanese Baccalaureate provides equity of access to students in both government and private systems.

Finally there was evidence of universities, as well as the coaching industry, stepping into the disjuncture to provide 'remediation' courses at tertiary level. There were indications that sometimes students who struggled to gain entry into university because of their language proficiency were conditionally admitted, and yet had to meet language targets before commencing their studies in their preferred majors.

What are the differences and similarities in perceptions of tertiary administrators and curriculum developers of the changing entry requirements and the responsibilities in preparing for these?

The interview data from admissions officers indicate that the decision by AUB to introduce SAT was made more because of perceived external pressures rather than one made on local issues. This was due to the identification of these universities in terms of its educational philosophy, standards and practices following the American liberal arts model of higher education. The decision related to obtaining and sustaining accreditation by American-style institutions. This shift to give preference to SAT scores had led to the other universities following suit.

The shift in entrance requirements had impacted greatly on students and their families. There were reports of the growth of 'shadow education', the private coaching sector, and of parents taking advantage of overseas travel and study where they could afford it (Bray, 2011). The students tended to see the shift causing an unconscionable burden on themselves and their families. They also perceived little support from educational authorities.

Teachers were aware of the changes but felt constrained or unable to address the changes in their present context. Head teacher and principal in the case study school also acknowledged the change but saw the role of their school more broadly. They tended to reject the pressure

of adapting and narrowing the school curriculum to meet tertiary entrance requirements. This changing requirement was seen as an additional burden on their workload and expectations of them as teachers. As English teachers they already had to prepare students for the Lebanese Baccalaureate whilst also keeping a focus on developing student language proficiency for the broader aims of future life and career. The shift in tertiary entrance requirements meant that they were being pressured by the needs of students who wanted to gain entry to American-style universities. They could see that such expectations could be professionally deskilling.

Government curriculum officials tended to see the private system as diverging more from the government system. They perceived their role as being responsible for secondary curriculum achievement testing rather than catering for the dividing tertiary system. It was not clear from the data their perceptions of how they viewed future trends and whether they saw a two-tier system developing although this would be the consequence of their position.

How do students of American- style universities perceive the challenges of the language based entry tests and the role and responsibilities of the school in preparing for these examinations?

The data indicate that students now attending American- style universities were discontent with their transition from secondary to tertiary education. They claim little change had been made to secondary school programs and curriculum to meet the changing entry requirements. Students reported the gap had led them to joining remedial English programs at tertiary level. The conscious or unconscious decision of the school not to change had led to the gap being filled by tertiary institutions and the coaching industry. The impact on exiting secondary school students in general and on the Lebanese Baccalaureate in particular has been profound. The Lebanese Baccalaureate has had to compete with the French and International Baccalaureates for several years. The International Baccalaureate, introduced in 1995, was given equivalence with the Lebanese Baccalaureate, and is offered in many independent schools. Tertiary American-style institutes in Lebanon favour the applicant with an IB over the Lebanese Baccalaureate because it is believed to be more prestigious and carries greater value. The factors influencing students' aspirations were met with disappointment and interviewees thought the experience and challenges of the language based entry tests to be inadequate due to a rigid English program during their senior schooling.

How do secondary students perceive and experience the issues of tertiary entry tests?

Secondary interviewees perceive the changing requirements as a burden that obstructed their process of gaining entry into their preferred university. The majority of interviewees criticised the school for focusing primarily on the National Curriculum, wanting more focus on the SAT and tertiary entrance exams and teaching for greater proficiency in English. Other students, however, perceived the SAT and other university language entry requirements as ignoring the standards set by their educational institution and undermining the perception of quality of education received at a private school. The data suggest secondary students' perceptions of these changing university entry requirements have impacted on their lives, altering beliefs about their school and what constitutes an effective high school English syllabus. There was a loss of confidence in the value of their schooling and growing reliance on private tutoring and individual responsibility in negotiating the pathways to tertiary entry. Students had also tended to internalise these issues, losing confidence in their ability, as this was confirmed by their need for remediation and private tutoring during secondary schooling. In fact, it is likely that the impact will have a trickle-down effect on secondary schools with students being prepared earlier to take a standardised exam like SAT. The pressures for help in preparing for SAT would mean narrowing the curriculum to serve an external need making the cause unfair and unrealistic.

In what ways do secondary teachers and executive respond to and accommodate the changing language requirements of American-style universities?

Both of the English teachers recognised the issues and voiced concern about their perceptions of these changing university entry requirements. They reported that it was difficult for them to meet the conflicting demands because of the priority they had to place on preparing the students for the official exams and the lack of time to provide preparation for exams that were outside the school curriculum. Teachers expressed reservations at the impact of tests like the SAT/TOEFL at multiple levels, implanting ideology, standards and teaching at a certain level since this robbed teachers of the best part of their time on the job: creative interactive time with students as they discuss and inquire into issues and problems that command authentic interest (Brosio, 2003). Both teachers were enthusiastic about making alterations to their teaching delivery to cater for the multiple learning outcomes. However, the potential take-up of such adaption was often met with confrontation by the principal and head teacher alike. Teachers reported they argued with their head teacher and principal every

time they addressed students' concern about SAT and how their credibility in the classroom is being questioned by learners due to conflicting learning goals.

What are the implications of the changing tertiary entry requirements in Lebanon for student access, school curriculum and key stakeholders?

Impact on students and families

In Lebanon there is a strong desire for parents to send their children to the best universities in the nation because education is highly valued. There is a trend to view education as the only vehicle for advancing to the next highest level of learning and gaining a degree. Many students were not content with their language skills acquired at school because it failed to meet the basic language requirement on a SAT exam used for entry into university. Parents and students do whatever it takes to gain entry and resort to private tutoring that tailors to the needs of entry. Not all students who attend private schools belong to the elite class. Many of them are from middle SES backgrounds and struggle to pay the education, but do so in the belief it will give their children a better education and therefore a brighter future. The real problem is that so many students eliminate themselves from any serious possibility of succeeding on the SAT and argue that the English syllabus during their secondary schooling failed to prepare them for university. This impacts students psychologically and emotionally especially when the results achieved on school-based tasks and national exams cannot secure a successful score on SAT. Equally important, for prospective test takers, the SAT epitomises English language ignorance and the need for intensive coaching. The additional expenses families bear in preparing their children for the exam and the cost of the exams themselves have serious implications for equity of access. Research by Bachmann et al. (2010) acknowledged that the importance of the SAT for college admission has increased over the past decade. Accordingly, demand for SAT preparation services has grown too. Many of the students seeking entry into private American-style universities in Lebanon turn to these tutoring and coaching services. This clearly shows the impact of marketisation and a testing industry that constituted a unique site for examining dimensions of knowledge commercialisation, reproduction of social class and inequality among urban elites in Lebanon.

Impact on teachers

The students bring a diverse range of expectations to their English language learning. For many their longer-term goals would be better served by a program focusing on developing

general proficiency that would help them in their future career and life including overseas study. For others, an immediate concern would be the secondary curriculum accreditation and Baccalaureate exams. Increasingly others would like to learn more about the skills needed for success in postsecondary education. The pressure for success in the Lebanese Baccalaureate at CHS impacts both on curriculum and pedagogy, narrowing teachers' work to gear education programmes to prepare for exams. To a great extent rote-learning and memorisation thus dominate classroom instruction. The focus is on subject matter to be contained in the exam instead of reasoning and critical thinking skills and the broader learning which may be of use in future study and career. Even if teachers had more flexibility in responding to the changing entry requirements the gap between proficiency/achievement tests and skills and language useful for tertiary study makes the situation more problematic. Achieving a successful score on SAT did not necessarily indicate readiness for university study as test-taking skills and knowledge needed to cope at university are two different entities. With the primary concern on the volume of information retained, teachers often tend to lose sight of the real goal of education. It could be argued that instead of drilling students to take an exam to achieve exceptional results, the real goal could be to open up minds to new concepts and ideas that affect daily lives. The quote from Socrates is pertinent to this issue "Look into your own selves and find the spark of truth that God has put into every heart, and only you can kindle to a flame," (Harris, 1994 pp. 2-3) Despite CHS teachers being aware of this, very little could be done as this was a syllabus imposed upon them by executive staff. Hence, the teachers in this study reported to have lost the drive and enthusiasm to teach such classes.

Impact on secondary schools

With the on-going changes in university entry requirements and the rigorous secondary school curriculum, the learning goals of students and those set by school come into conflict, creating confusion and non-regulation. Therefore mission strategy becomes an issue for the schools. The secondary private school is less powerful because it seeks to prepare students for the Lebanese Baccalaureate imposed by government that does not coincide with the learning needs of students' postsecondary phase. Given these constraints, many secondary schools monitor the changes happening, but choose not to intervene. Yet while some elite private schools may take the initiative to adapt their programmes, others tend to emphasise the single criterion of the Lebanese Baccalaureate because heavy reliance is placed on this exam when a school is screened for its credibility. Each institution in the public and private

sector has different goals and expectations for its school. Hence, the introduction of SAT as entry requirement into universities in Lebanon impacts the secondary school's mission strategies and vision it holds for its exiting students.

Impact on universities

The impact of the changes on tertiary systems is threefold. Firstly, the gap between 'globalised' prestige universities and other Lebanese institutions will become greater with entrenched inequalities of access for high/mid and low-SES students. Secondly, the separation of the high prestige universities means that the national education system takes less of a role in tertiary education. This has been a finding in other studies – that governments in developing countries are constrained developing higher education and limited to focussing more on basic education (Job and Sriraman, 2013). The third impact is that the prestige universities gain power over the secondary system and take on the role of preparing students for tertiary entry. The introduction of remedial streams confirms this.

The inversion of the educational pyramid in Lebanon reveals that the Lebanese attach more importance to the increments of the educational and sociological quality in primary education than in middle or higher education. This means that the lower levels of education seem to function as a critical threshold of social and economic differentiation; this probably relates to the mastering of foreign languages and basic intellectual skills rather than the acquisition of more developed knowledge. This does not mean that no attention is paid to differences in the educational and sociological quality of middle and especially of higher education. However, in higher education, the wider differences in courses and disciplines, as well as the variations in the conditions of access, make the choices more complex. For example, the American-style university seeks a transnational education presence in Lebanon. Thus local students, who acquired English as a foreign language, are viewed as learners in a global market. As higher educational institutes in Lebanon continue to lose ground to the national secondary system on issues of quality and university readiness, the nexus between the two phases can no longer avoid the existing confrontation.

Impact on the status and prestige of Arabic / French and English language and education

According to Shaaban and Ghaith (1999), the traditional cultural-linguistic conflict between Arabic and foreign languages as media of instruction is now shifting towards "full-fledged multilingualism in society as well as in education" (1999, p. 1) and is being gradually replaced by a struggle between English and French, with English gaining ground so far,

mainly because of economic and practical considerations. There are claims that the importance of the French culture and language in Lebanon has been gradually weakening mainly because of the rapid spread of American culture throughout the country (Constantine, 1995). In the current national curriculum, the learning of Arabic and the first foreign language (English or French) carry equal importance, with six periods a week allotted to each. The language curriculum is now in its 16th year of implementation, and although there are no rigorous results as yet to the extent of the effectiveness of the new approaches, students' and teachers' experiences in the public sector have indicated a general positive attitude in the learning situation (BouJaoudeh & Ghaith, 2006).

Impact on the equality of access to educational outcomes

Elite universities in Lebanon such as AUB and LAU are seeking international recognition by complying with external decisions about local issues. This can be seen in their commitment to meet standards orchestrated and operated under American "accreditation and sponsorship" (Altbach, 2004, p.9). According to the 2008-2009 NHDR the Lebanese education system was described as a "dual system" in which the middle and SES-background students seek private education and the lower SES seek public education (p.130). This differentiation has been accompanied by the rise of English to near total hegemony as a kind of linguistic 'Tyrannosaurus Rex' (Canagarajah, 2002; Swales, 1997). The global commercial testing industry has established itself inside EFL assessment with the standardised EFL proficiency tests. A growing number of exiting high school students in Lebanon who opt for the American style university are then directed into remediation in English. This is something which only middle and higher SES families can afford.

Within the political economy and culture of politics of English as an international language, a testing industry is being created that funnels dimensions of knowledge commercialisation and reproduces societies to serve the urban elites (Templer, 2004). This picture is at the core of the Lebanese context.

7.2 Recommendations

The international movement of labour markets, the globalisation of media and trade and the increase in migration have made deterritorialisation inevitable and a common feature of modern societies, where communities reconstruct affiliations and attachments away from their original contexts (Appadurai, 1996, 2000). The introduction of the SAT at AUB, LAU and other American-style universities in Lebanon marks a structural change in which some

universities see their role as regional and part of the international tertiary 'marketplace' rather than as part of a national system. The admission officers at AUB and LAU reported they are partners with American universities in the U.S. which adhere to a charter from the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York. Hence, they aligned more with their American counterparts.

Unfortunately, there are very few studies that have attempted to identify how the SAT has impacted on students seeking admission into American-style universities in Lebanon and why these universities are pursuing various policies linked to reform and how they are affecting exiting high school students or changing their expectations, options or experiences upon admission into higher education. The SAT is a contested tertiary entrance test in the North American context, with research evidence showing that it disadvantages women and students from minority groups. The use of SAT in a context where there is no evidence of its validity and where English is not the medium of instruction is fraught with problems. The limited evidence from this small-scale case study suggests that it is probable that the implementation of the SAT could lead to further fragmentation of the Lebanese tertiary and secondary systems in the pursuit of 'globalisation' by elite universities.

It is important in this context for equity of access to both secondary and tertiary education in Lebanon to be addressed and the notion of a system to be re-examined in light of the fragmentation and divisions occurring.

On the basis of analysis of the empirical data gathered through questionnaires, surveys and interviews, a number of recommendations are offered for consideration.

7.2.1 Government and Private Schooling in Lebanon

Despite the traditional division between government and private schooling in Lebanon there has been an understanding that both constituted a 'system' of education. The traditional exit point, the Lebanese Baccalaureate, was an accepted achievement test for tertiary entry. This existed alongside English language tests for the more prestigious American-style universities. The introduction of the SAT seems to reflect a break in this system and the growing irrelevance of the Lebanese Baccalaureate. The failure of both private and government schooling to meet the new tertiary entry requirements is thus leading to the development of a coaching industry and remediation pathways at universities. The question for the government in terms of secondary education is what responsibility does it have for secondary education.

Even though a large percentage of students attend private schools, surely the responsibility of the state is to ensure secondary outcomes which both cover an agreed upon curriculum and which prepare students for post-secondary education and work. To abnegate responsibility for the private sector is to consent to a diminished educational scope for the public sector. The first recommendation is therefore that:

Government authorities re-examine the Lebanese Baccalaureate and its relevance to government and private secondary schools and post-secondary education and work.

7.2.2 CERD and its Future Role

This discussion of the scope of government responsibility applies specifically to CERD. Based on the findings, CERD needs to readdress the curriculum reforms, which have been officially in operation since 1997. These have either not been translated properly to meet the learner needs in the private sector or need to be upgraded to meet the challenges of a very rapidly changing world. CERD developers should review the senior English syllabus so that it addresses the reality that private and public sectors must meet the global English language market as the local standards are inadequate to meet future demands. In order for English language teaching to be supported by both teachers and students alike, there must be more investment in public research, particularly in terms of believing that one methodology or syllabus cannot be applied to all. The private sector needs to have greater flexibility and cannot be part of the principal model that suggests a 'one-size-fits-all' as is currently applied to the public sector. The future role of CERD is to allow on-going needs analysis to shape a description of the nature of the teaching and learning that caters for the secondary level. The needs analysis should be the starting point for devising syllabi, courses, materials and the kind of teaching and learning that happens in any classroom. With English becoming internationalised, more and more American-style universities are changing their entry requirements as part of their admission process and this calls for a stronger alignment between the private and public sectors. The analysis of the data indicates that for the admission process to be more practical and realistic, private universities in Lebanon should recognise and give greater weighting to the national external exam in Year 12 since so much effort and time is dedicated to its attainment. The second recommendation is that:

- ***The English Language Curriculum and examinations be reviewed and revised to address the shifting tertiary entry requirements in Lebanon to be more in line with students' post-secondary needs and destinations.***

7.2.3 Entry into American-style Universities in Lebanon

The responsibility of the prestige universities in this shift needs to be explored. No test is 'neutral' and the responsibility of test users is now the focus of much international research. The findings from this study indicate that the introduction of the SAT and other changes in English admission exams are entrenching the existing gap between secondary and tertiary education. This gap is a key problem in Lebanon because of the different origins of the two systems, particularly when the national curriculum does not align with globalised aspirations of most private universities in Lebanon. Unlike the U.S., Lebanon has a national curriculum and an external national exam (the Lebanese Baccalaureate) for exiting high school students. Therefore, both state and private schools and American-style universities in Lebanon should work together to ensure high school students, their teachers and other representatives have sufficient information about university entrance requirements, placement tests and the costs associated with going to university. There is a strong case to be made that private American-style universities in Lebanon should find an alternative for the SAT with an entry exam that measures language proficiency rather than critical thinking as this is the objective of SAT. In the catalogues for both AUB and LAU, the required entrance exam is SAT1, but other English proficiency tests are used as alternatives, particularly EEE, TOEFL and IELTS. However, the emphasis is on SAT when going through application process. This means that if an applicant receives the needed score on SAT, there is no need for further examining, but if the applicant falls short of the score, he/she is requested to have as many attempts as the time permits to achieve the desired score. Once the applicant can no longer take the SAT due to test deadlines, one of the language proficiency tests mentioned above becomes an alternative. This is communicated to applicants inconspicuously so that SAT is at the forefront. This information is often obtained by prospective university students either a few months before finishing high school or upon completion. There is serious need for stronger coordination between the secondary and tertiary systems in order to facilitate the transitional process from high school into university. The third recommendation is therefore that:

- ***Tertiary institutions research the impact of the SAT on test takers and the relevance and impact of its use in the Lebanese context.***

7.2.4 CHS and the Private School System

For many years the private school in Lebanon was looked upon as a privilege for students to enrol in and gain the best of education. Lebanese parents invested in their children by sending

them to the most prestigious schools. Attending these schools happened at considerable costs and placed financial strain on many parents. From the evidence in this case study, private schooling has been slow in responding to the shifting tertiary context. The private tutoring industry and universities have thus stepped in to fill this gap. Unless there is greater flexibility in the private school system, it will also lose relevance and greater burdens will be placed on parents. It is recommended that CHS starts adopting a more flexible syllabus in the English subject at secondary phase so that it caters for both the Lebanese Baccalaureate and entry into elite universities as these are often the priority for many of its students. Therefore, it is recommended that the school implement two strands of the English subject at senior high school level: One with current syllabus style and the other an opt-in university style program. The fourth recommendation is therefore that:

- ***Private schools such as Castle High review their curriculum and introduce more flexibility in supporting students to meet a range of post-secondary destinations.***

7.2.5 Further Complementary Research

Although this study cannot claim to be able to be generalised, this project provides what Thomas (2011) calls exemplary knowledge which is

> an example viewed and heard in the context of another's experience... but used in the context of one's own... the example is not taken to be representative, typical or standard, nor is the sense of being a model or an example... Rather, it is taken to be a particular representation given in the context and understood in that context. However, it is interpretative only in one's own experience of one's phronesis, rather than one's theory. (p. 31)

In other words, this study examined one school and largely can be considered an exemplum of private Anglophone schools in Lebanon. The students' and teachers' experiences illustrated in this study pinpointed the impacts the SAT has had on their lives and these observations were interpreted through the different research tools adopted to carry out this research. Thus, as Thomas (2011) discussed, Lincoln and Guba's (1985, p. 124) 'transferability' and 'fittingness' in the case context come into play here with the inter-subjectivities between responder and composer/researcher emphasised. The reader can only make connections through the links or insights he/she can see in these experiences. Such exemplary knowledge should be evaluated in terms of how much it contributed to one's

understanding although it is presented from another's "horizon of meaning" (Thomas, 2011, p. 32).

The data presented in this study should provide enough ground for the reader to discern the kind of connection to be made in a contextual manner.

As is the case with any research project, while this enquiry investigated several issues linked to one Anglophone school in Lebanon, it also formed the rationale for further research projects investigating the impact of SAT on students whose second foreign language is French because more recently many of the students graduating from French-style private high schools are seeking an American-style university degree in spite of having received their education through French-medium schools. In many ways testing and assessment reflect the political and social contexts in which they exist. Lebanese students' motivation for learning English as a second language as opposed to learning French, for example, is presumably largely shaped by their family's religious and political affiliations. One might expect that most Maronite Christians, having a long history of attending French-medium schools and placing much importance on the vitality of and prestige of French, would want their children to continue in this tradition. However, the importance of English in commerce and business nowadays has prompted these same individuals to encourage their children to learn both languages. Lebanese who have no affiliations with France and the French language, on the other hand, are likely to encourage their children to learn English with little concern for them learning French. This directly impacts the students' choices concerning the tertiary institute they attend upon reaching that stage. It would be interesting to investigate the trials and tribulations these students encounter and to see whether the experiences are in any way similar or different to those whose first foreign language is English. A recent observation made on AUB and LAU campuses is that an increasing number of students are conversing in French while discussing their American-model courses. Surprisingly, many of these French-educated students are reported to achieve better results than the English-educated students.

The final recommendation is therefore that:

- ***Further research be conducted into the secondary-tertiary nexus in Lebanon and other Arabic-speaking countries to explore the impact of changing tertiary entry requirements on equity and access to educational outcomes.***

Recognizing that the secondary –tertiary nexus in Lebanon poses many challenges, it is vital for all –ether on a ministerial or institutional level to cooperate and ensure greater collaboration to help bridge the educational gap.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Key Interview Questions for participants at School, University & CERD in response to research questions

Interviewee(s)	RQ1: What are the differences and similarities in perceptions of tertiary administrators and curriculum developers of the changing entry requirements and the responsibilities in preparing for these?
Curriculum Designers (Ministry of Education) • 2 curriculum designers from the MoE interviewed • Interviews lasted between 20 and 30 minutes	1. To what extent do you think that the high school curriculum should prepare students for entry into tertiary study? 2. To what extent do you think that the high school curriculum does prepare students for entry into tertiary study? 3. To what extent do you think that the high school English syllabus prepares students for entry into tertiary study at a university where the medium of instruction is English? 4. To what extent do you think that the high school curriculum prepares students for international entrance exams that are required at some universities in Lebanon? 5. To what extent do MoE curriculum developers take these issues into consideration when designing curricula? 6. How feasible would it be to incorporate international exam preparation into the high school language curriculum? 7. How likely is it that such a change to the curriculum would occur in the near future?
Admissions Officers • 3 admissions officers from American universities interviewed • Interviews lasted between 15 and 20 minutes	1. When Lebanese students have the opportunity to sit for an official Lebanese Baccalaureate English exam why does this university further require prospective students to sit the SAT, TOEFL or EEE? 2. Are there any other International English tests (e.g. IELTS) that are being considered as being acceptable as an entrance exam in the near future? 3. To what extent do you think that the high school curriculum should prepare students for entry into tertiary study at this university? 4. To what extent do you think that the high school curriculum does prepare students for entry into tertiary study at this university? 5. To what extent do you think that the high school curriculum should prepare students for international university entrance exams? 6. Are there any changes to the current curriculum that you would like to see that would better prepare students for entry to and study at their preferred university?
Interviewees	RQ2: How do students at American-style universities perceive the challenges of the language-based entry tests and role and responsibilities of schools in preparing for these examinations?
• **6 students interviewed** • **3 males** • **3 females**	1. Do you consider your school helped you in getting ready for tertiary study? 2. What were some of the different language challenges in terms of meeting the standards for entry into university? 3. How did you prepare for the entry exams into university?
Interviewee(s)	RQ3: How do secondary students perceive and experience the issues of tertiary entry tests?
Pre-test students • 11 students interviewed (4 x HU; 4 x LS; 3 x GS)	1. What do you consider to be more important, preparing for the Lebanese Baccalaureate English examination or Preparing for the language component of the SAT and for the TOEFL or other English test which you will have to sit to get into university?
	2. What preparations do you make for the SAT and for the TOEFL?

• Interviews lasted between 20 and 30 minutes	3. How do you juggle your English study time?
	4. Do you think that the school's English programme is helping you prepare for the SAT and TOEFL? 5. (if not) What extra things would you like the school to help with in this regard without jeopardising your prospects for the official examinations?
Interviewee(s)	
Post-test students • 10 students interviewed (3 x HUM; 3 x LS; 4 x GS) • Interviews lasted between 20 and 30 minutes	1. Were the language sections of the SAT and TOEFL (or whatever test you sat) what you expected?
	2. In retrospect, do you think your high schooling prepared you adequately for these tests?
	3. How do you think schools should prepare Grade 11 and 12 students for these tests without jeopardising their prospects for the Lebanese Baccalaureate English examinations?
Interviewee(s)	RQ4: In what ways do secondary teachers and the executive respond to and accommodate the changing language requirements of American-style universities?
Teachers • 2 teachers of English interviewed • Interviews lasted between 20 and 30 minutes	1. What do you consider to be the objectives of the Grade 11 and 12 English programmes with respect to their outcomes? 2. What criteria do you apply as to whether your programme is achieving those goals?
Teachers and Administrators • 2 teachers of English and 1 head teacher of English interviewed • Interviews lasted between 20 and 30 minutes	1. Most students want to attend American-modelled universities upon leaving school, which involves sitting for the SAT and English proficiency tests such as TOEFL and the EEE. They presumably expect the school's English programme to prepare them for these tests. How do you respond to this expectation?
	2. Can you accommodate the need to prepare your students for the language component of the SAT and for the TOEFL as well as for the Lebanese Baccalaureate examinations? 3. What are your priorities? 4. How can the school cater for both sets of requirements? 5. What have you done in this area and how did it go?
School Principal • 1 school principal interviewed • Interview lasted between 15 and 20 minutes	1. To what extent do you think that the high school curriculum should prepare students for entry into tertiary study? 2. To what extent do you think that the high school curriculum does prepare students for entry into tertiary study? 3. To what extent do you think that the high school English syllabus prepares students for entry into tertiary study at a university where the medium of instruction is English? 4. To what extent do you think that the high school curriculum should prepare students for American university entrance exams? 5. To what extent do you think that the high school curriculum prepares students for American university entrance exams? 6. Are there any changes to the current curriculum that you would like to see that would better prepare students for entry to and study at their preferred university?

All Interview Questions for Teachers

#	Question	Reason for Question
1.	Describe your tertiary academic training. Where and when did you receive this training?	defines the interviewee's academic background as an educator
2.	How long have you been a teacher and what are the class levels you have had experience in?	defines the interviewee's post-graduation teaching experience
3.	What language skills do you tend to emphasise and why?	defines the interviewee's language teaching priorities

4.	Who decides what is important knowledge for students and how is this facilitated?	defines extent to which the interviewee has control over what and how the subject is taught
5.	Have you any knowledge of the SAT or TOEFL exams? Please summarise your knowledge of these.	identifies whether the interviewee has background knowledge of these tests
6.	Have you received any training in exam preparation for these tests? Do you feel you already have the competence to prepare students for such tests without training?	defines the interviewee's confidence in being able to prepare students for these tests
7.	How effective is the current school curriculum or syllabus of English at senior secondary level in preparing students for entry into tertiary study?	identifies the interviewee's level of confidence in the efficacy for tertiary entrance of the school's curriculum/syllabus
8.	Do you consider that the English taught at secondary level is adequate for students' future needs either in the workforce or for further study? Please explain.	identifies the interviewee's level of confidence in the efficacy for work or tertiary study of the school's curriculum/syllabus
9.	What resources do teachers resort to in planning their lessons and how well does this align with preparing students for official exams?	identifies availability and usefulness of resources to interviewee
10.	As a senior secondary school English teacher, what do you consider to be of greater importance, official exams or university entrance exams? Please explain.	identifies interviewee's teaching priorities

Main Interview Questions for Students

#	Question	Reason for Question
1.	• How long have you been learning English? • Have you received any private tutoring in a specific area of this language?	establishes the interviewee's familiarity with English and pinpoints possible difficulties the interviewee has with the language
2.	• What skills do you emphasise as a learner. • How would you assess your abilities in these skills?	identifies the interviewee's self-perception of his/her strengths and weaknesses and areas she/he considers important
3.	• What knowledge do you have of the SAT/TOEFL exams? • When did you learn this?	identifies interviewee's prior knowledge of SAT/TOEFL
4.	• Are these exams a prerequisite for entry into your prospective university? • How are you preparing for these tests?	identifies interviewee's needs regarding SAT/TOEFL identifies interviewee's perceived preparation needs
5.	As a senior secondary student, how well does the school help you prepare for these tests?	identifies interviewee's expectations of the school and how well the school meets these
6.	How well does the content in your text book for the English language align with what you expect to encounter on a SAT/TOEFL exam?	identifies interviewee's expectations of the course book and how well it meets these
7.	Does the English curriculum provide you with the necessary skills needed to succeed or achieve the required score on the SAT/TOEFL exam?	identifies interviewee's expectations of the curriculum and how well it meets these
8.	What changes in the methods of teaching or delivery of material would you like the teachers and the school to emphasise more in order to better prepare you for entry into university?	identifies areas that the interviewee feels need to be addressed
9.	What is more difficult, the official exam or the university entrance tests? Please explain.	identifies how the interviewee rates the comparative difficulty of the tests
10.	Did you receive any help with preparation for the SAT/TOEFL during your English course? Please explain.	identifies whether the interviewee feels well-prepared for the SAT/TOEFL

Re-interview Questions for students

1	How many times did you take the SAT exam?
2	When did you last take the exam?
3	How did you prepare for it?
4	What university are you applying to? WHY?
5	How much did the whole preparation for the exam cost?
6	What did you learn from the experience?
7	What recommendations do you make to future applicants?

Interview Questions for University Students

#	Question	Reason for Question
1	Do you consider your school helped you in getting ready for tertiary study?	Identifies areas where the school either supported or neglected students
2	What were some of the different language challenges in terms of meeting the standards for entry into university?	Identifies the gaps of the English curriculum at secondary schooling
3	How did you prepare for the entry exams into university?	Identifies whether the interviewee feels well-prepared for the SAT/TOEFL
4	What changes do you recommend your English teachers make at school so that future university students are better ready for tertiary education?	Determines students' perspective on learner needs during changing times and what students consider to be important knowledge.

Appendix 2: Needs Analysis Questionnaire for senior secondary students at CHS

Dear student,

In order to identify your learning needs at this phase of your education, I would like to find out more about what you need to learn and how you would like to learn. In the questions below please tick in the appropriate box or give a written answer. Thank you.

Educational and work aspirations
After you finish studying at high school what are you planning to do?

Study more ❑ what major and at what university/college? _____
_____

Find a job ❑ what kind? _____

Strengths and weaknesses

Do you have any problems with any of the following?

1. Understanding the instructions given in English across the curriculum? ❑ Yes ❑ No
2. Reading an article from an English newspaper? ❑ Yes ❑ No
3. Writing an essay? ❑ Yes ❑ No
4. Speaking to people? ❑ Yes ❑ No
5. Filling in forms (example: university application form)? ❑ Yes ❑ No
6. Giving an oral presentation? ❑ Yes ❑ No
7. Responding to vocabulary questions using contextual clues? ❑ Yes ❑ No
8. Identifying language techniques in a literary text? (examples: personification, paradoxes, metaphors, etc.) ❑ Yes ❑ No
9. Understanding collocations and connotations in written or spoken texts? ❑ Yes ❑ No
10. Understanding and using idiomatic and colloquial expressions Appropriately? ❑ Yes ❑ No

Student Survey

(To be conducted with senior secondary students)

1 In your English study during your time at Al-Quala Secondary School, have your teachers asked you about your English language learning needs?

2 If yes, how much time have your teachers spent on this activity (i.e. finding out about your needs?)

3 How much notice did your teachers take of what you said?

__ a lot of notice

__ some notice

__ not much notice

4 How strongly do you agree with the following statements about a competency-based curriculum? Tick (✓) the appropriate box.

5 = strongly agree; 4 = moderately agree; 3 = agree; 2 = moderately disagree; 1 = strongly disagree

	5	4	3	2	1
The competencies were only a part of the course.					
The competencies dominated the course.					
The competencies were a useful part of the course.					
The competencies made the course boring.					

5 Were there any competencies that you found especially useful?

__ social competencies

__ report writing

__ discussion

__ letter writing

__ résumé/CV

__ oral presentation

__ casual conversation

__ reading information text

__ essay writing

6 Were there any competencies that you didn't find useful? Please explain.

Appendix 3: Consent Form

Research Title:

Changing the Rules of the Game; Stakeholders Perceptions of Using the SAT as an entry requirement for Higher Education in Lebanon

RESEARCHER'S NAME: SARWAT DABAGA

I have been given information about *Stakeholders Perceptions of Using the SAT as an entry requirement for Higher Education in Lebanon* and discussed the research project with *Sarwat Dabaga* who is conducting this research as part of a *Doctorate Degree* supervised by Rd. Ken Cruickshank in the department of *Education* at the University of Sydney.

I have been advised of the potential risks and burdens associated with this research, which include none, and have had an opportunity to ask *Sarwat Dabaga* any questions I may have about the research and my participation.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary: I am free to refuse to participate and I am free to withdraw from the research at any time. My refusal to participate or withdrawal of consent will not affect *relationship with my colleagues nor have any effect on my position at school/university/or any workplace*

If I have any enquiries about the research, I can contact *Sarwat Dabaga* ***and*** *Rd. Ken Cruickshank* or if I have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research is or has been conducted, I can contact the Ethics Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, Office of Research, University of Sydney on (612) 9351 5021.

By signing below I am indicating my consent to

- Participating in a 30 minute interview that will be audio-recorded.
- Responding to emails, ongoing informal chats and contributing to blogs on the internet. (maximum five responses)
- Allowing access to portfolios and school records.
- Completing a questionnaire.

I understand that the data collected from my participation will be used for the purpose of an EdD thesis and possible journal publications and I consent for them to be used in that manner.

Signed Date

..../...../.....
Name (please print)

.....