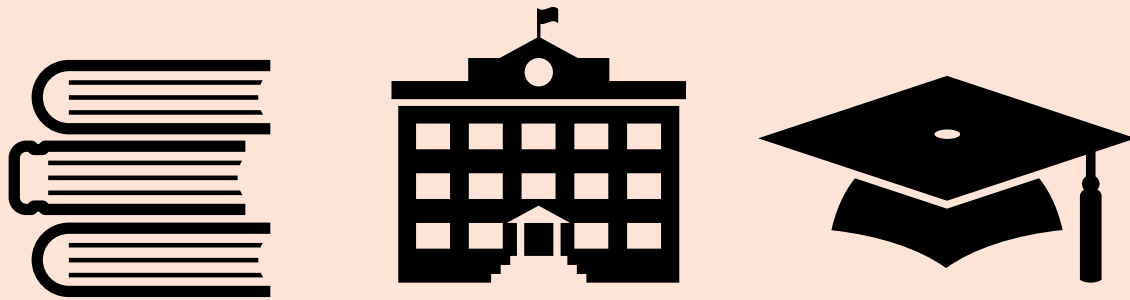


Report: The Quality of Education in Kuwait.

August 2018

Authors: Dherar Murad & Leanah Al Awadhi



August 2018

Introducing Cross Cultural Data.

Since 2013, **The Cross Cultural Diwaniya** (CCD) has been a platform for elevating conversations emerging from intellectual minds across multiple social backgrounds and circles within Kuwait. The CCD believes that data and knowledge sharing is key towards development within the region, it has identified such gap in the region and wishes to fulfil it.

Therefore, the CCD now aims to transform knowledge shared within its *Diwaniya's* (traditional gatherings made for conversing in the Gulf Region) into data reports for the goodwill of our audience and region. This data will be presented with other data collected through original public opinion questionnaires and surveys issued by the CCD.

The Cross Cultural Diwaniya team would like to thank you for being part of its exciting new journey, **Cross Cultural Data** (CCData).

Here is to enlightening minds and to elevating more conversations.

Sincerely,

Faisal Al Fuhaid & Leanah Al Awadhi,
Co-Founders of The Cross Cultural Diwaniya.

August 2018

The Quality of Education in Kuwait.

Introduction

Ever since its independence, Kuwait has prioritised education as a cornerstone of its central policies. In 1960, Kuwait recorded the largest educational budget in the Arab World (Alanba Newspaper, 2007). This priority was emphasised and legitimised within the writing up of the Kuwaiti constitution (1962). Article 13 of the constitution assures that “Education is a fundamental requisite of the progress of society, assured and promoted by the state”. This was complimented with Article 40 of the constitution which elaborated the importance of education marking it as a “guaranteed right for all Kuwaiti’s”.

Such prioritisation of education by the state lead to a number of educational breakthroughs at the time. Within the early 1960’s, the Ministry of Education appointed a number of experts tasked with the sole responsibility of establishing a university. These experts included renown American University of Beirut and Cambridge University professors. Such state efforts facilitated the establishment of Kuwait’s prime higher education institute represented in Kuwait University in 1966, five years after independence (KUNA, 2016).

Although the state’s scholarship system to study abroad was regulated in 1988 upon the foundation of the Ministry of Higher Education, university scholarships funded by the state can be dated back to 1939 when Kuwaiti students were appointed to Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt to pursue their higher education (Alanba Newspaper, 2007). This continued in 1942 (Beirut), 1943 (Bahrain), Cairo (1945, 1950) and England (1950). These higher education expeditions sponsored by the State paved the way for the full-scale sponsorship system that Kuwait prides itself of having today.

Nonetheless, although the state dedicates around 15% (2015) of its total expenditure towards education (Kuwait Times, 2017), Kuwait has been ranked 85th globally in higher education and 88th in education quality (2016), in accordance to the Global Competitiveness Report (World Economic Forum, 2016).

Even Kuwait’s higher education emblem, in 2015, Kuwait University, was ranked 9th (within the GCC Region), 19th (within the Arab World) 83rd (on the MENA region level) (Kuwait Times, 2015).

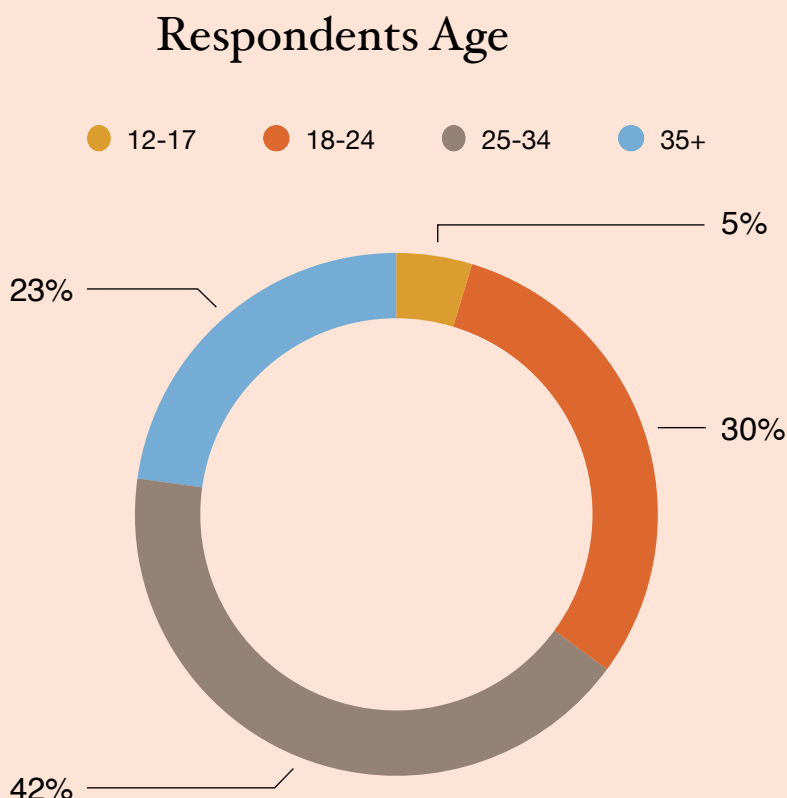
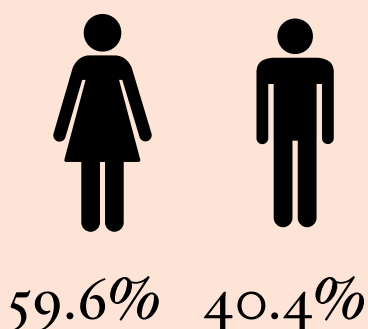
It may be assumed that the bulk of education spending by the state is not focused on the quality of education but rather on the enhancement of the state’s basic education foundation. According to the World Bank, Kuwait excelled in literacy rates marking 99.5% (in 2015) yet the World Economic Forum labelled the quality of education in Kuwait to be relatively low in 2015 (Kuwait Times, 2017). Given this Kuwaiti educational dilemma, the CCD sought to examine the quality of education in Kuwait from a societal perspective. This has been done through a two hour Diwaniya discussion and through an original questionnaire distributed by the CCD.

Data Results & Analysis

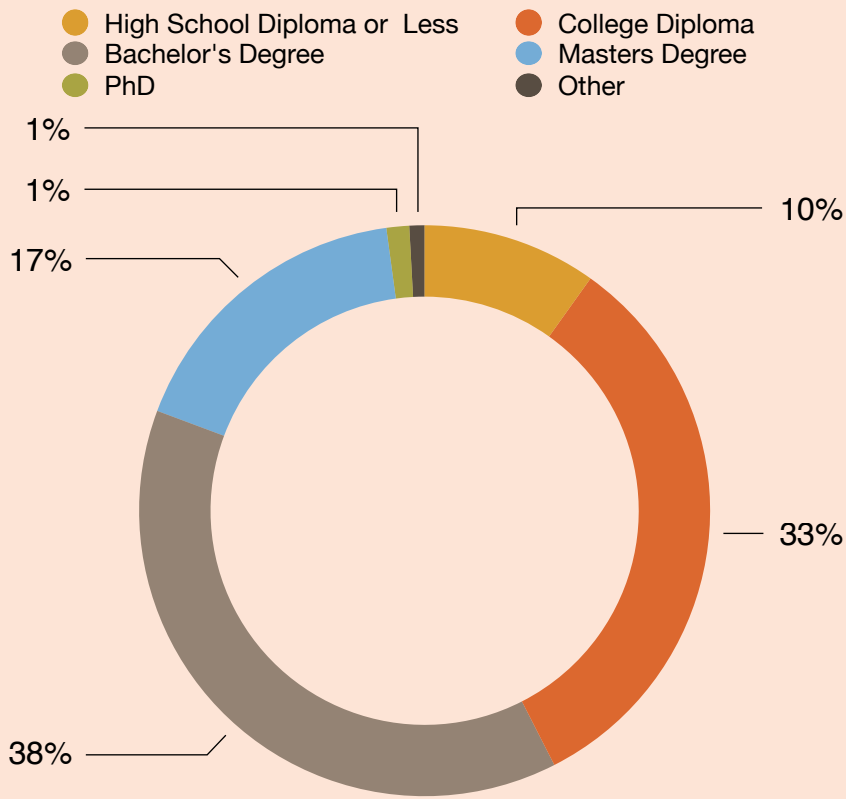
Questionnaire Data:

Within the CCD’s online questionnaire “The Quality of Education in Kuwait”, a total of **171 responses** were collected from both Arabic and English questionnaires. Eight questions were asked, below are the results and analyses for our questions.

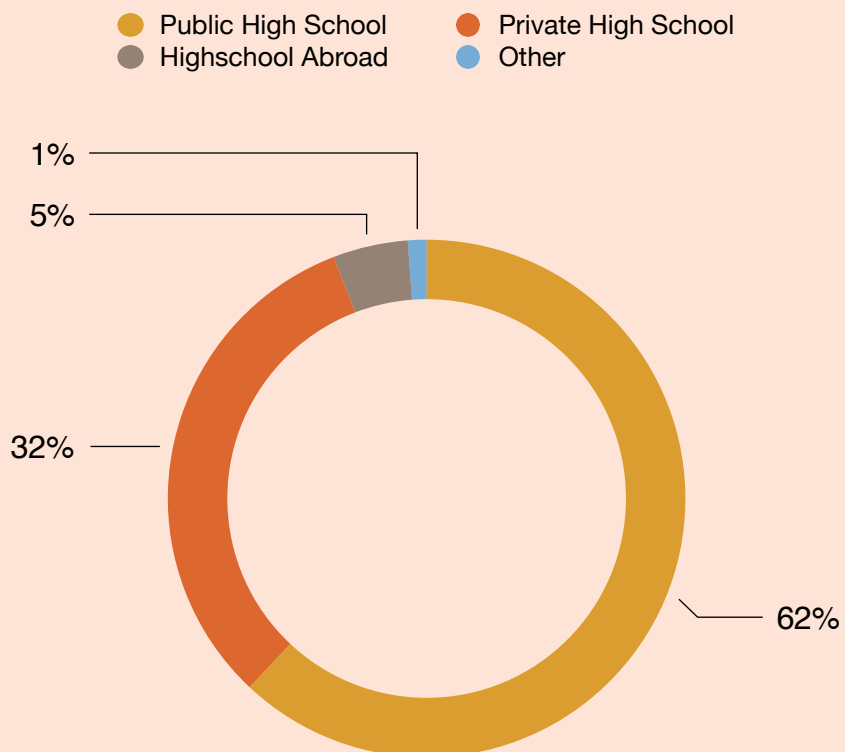
Respondents Demographics:



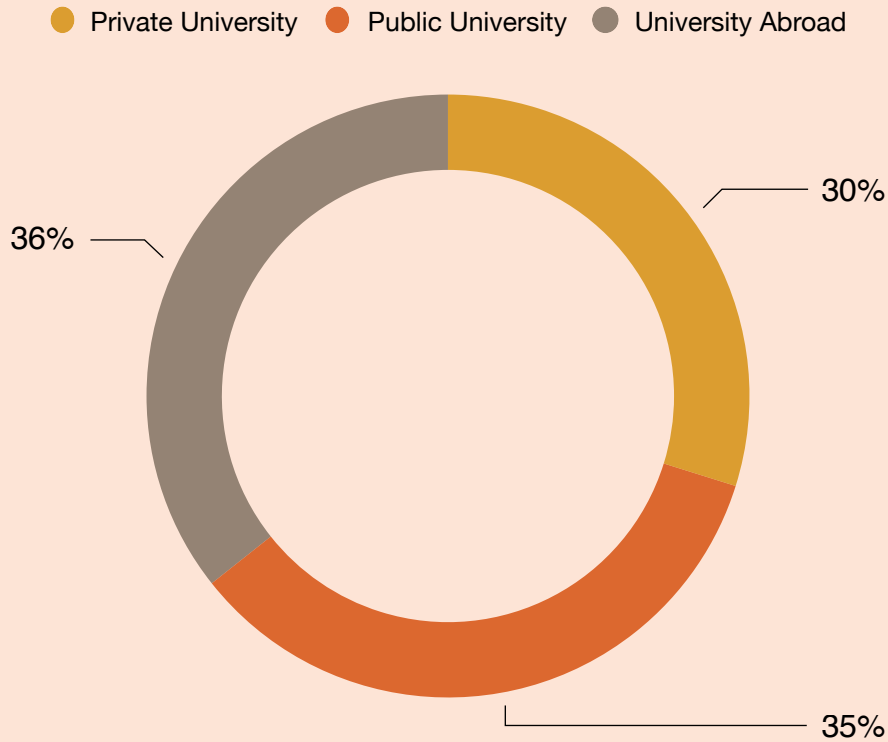
Respondents Highest Level of Education



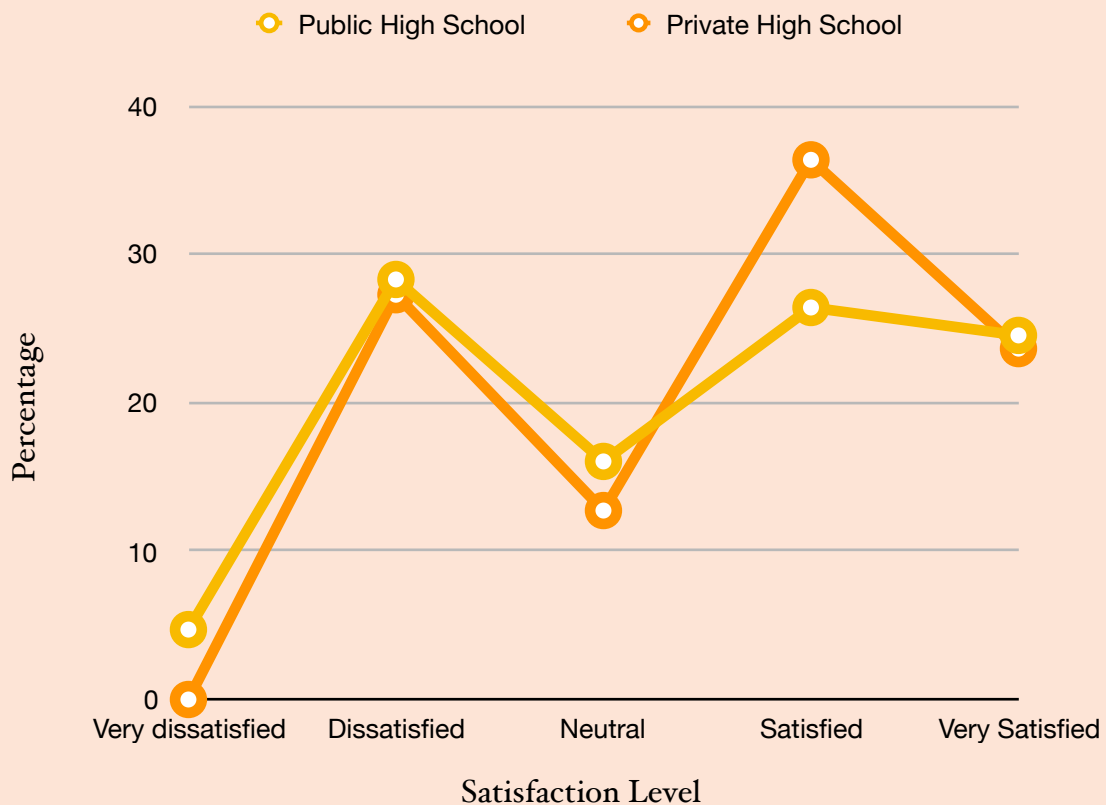
Respondents Type of High School



Respondents Type of University



Question: How satisfied were or are you with the quality of education throughout your high school experience?

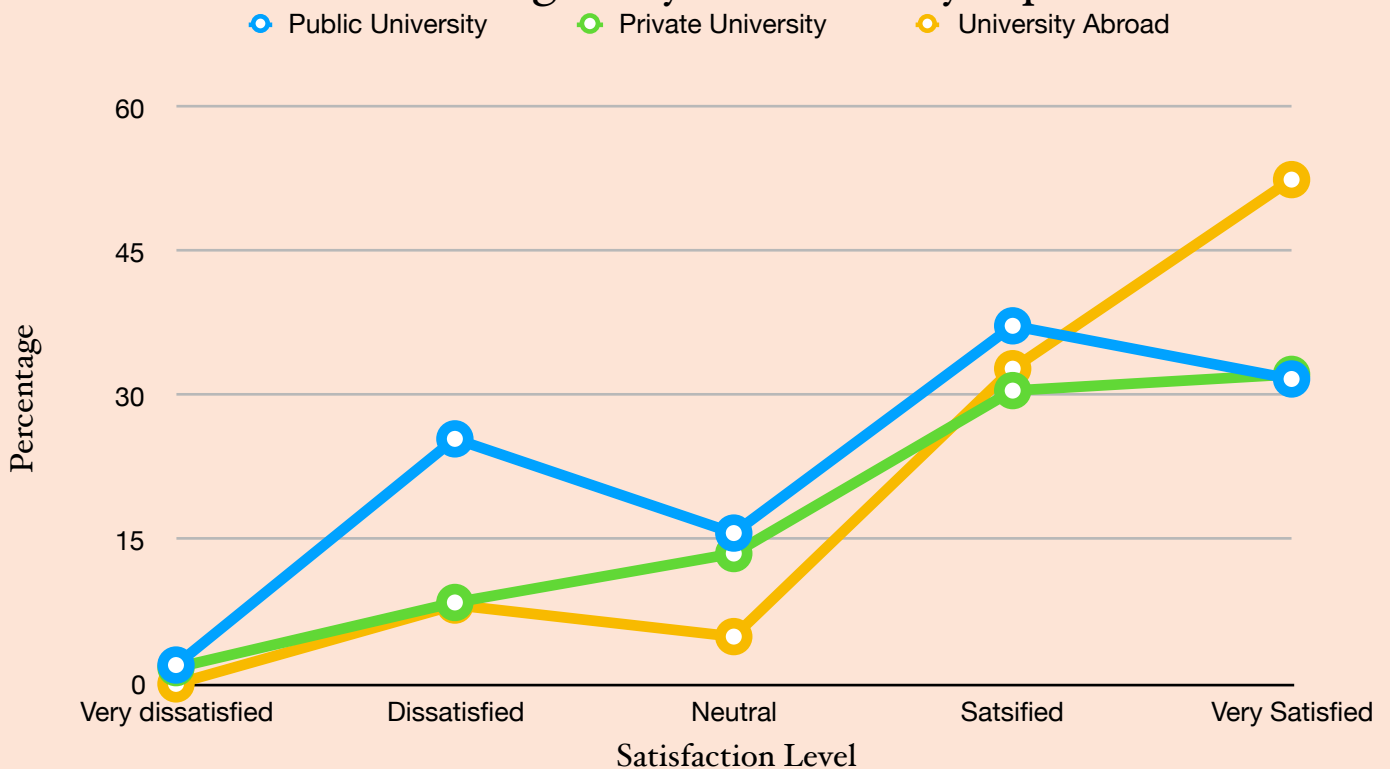


Question: How satisfied were or are you with the quality of education throughout your high school experience?

When analysing respondents attitudes towards this question, there was a **similarity** between private and public school attendees. However, **no respondents attending private schools claimed to have been “very dissatisfied”** with their high school experience, and they also had a higher percentage of respondents describing their high school experience satisfaction with “satisfied”.

In 2015, 1300 schools were recorded within Kuwait, 62% of them being public schools. This great majority of state-funded schools affirms the state’s emphasis on the significance of education in producing sustainable employment. Additionally, Kuwait spends an average of 14,300 USD on each student per year (for public school attendees). Kuwait’s spending exceeds the GCC average of 11,000 USD per student per year and USA’s & Australia’s average of 12,000 USD per year per student. Greater spending could correlate with higher satisfaction levels.

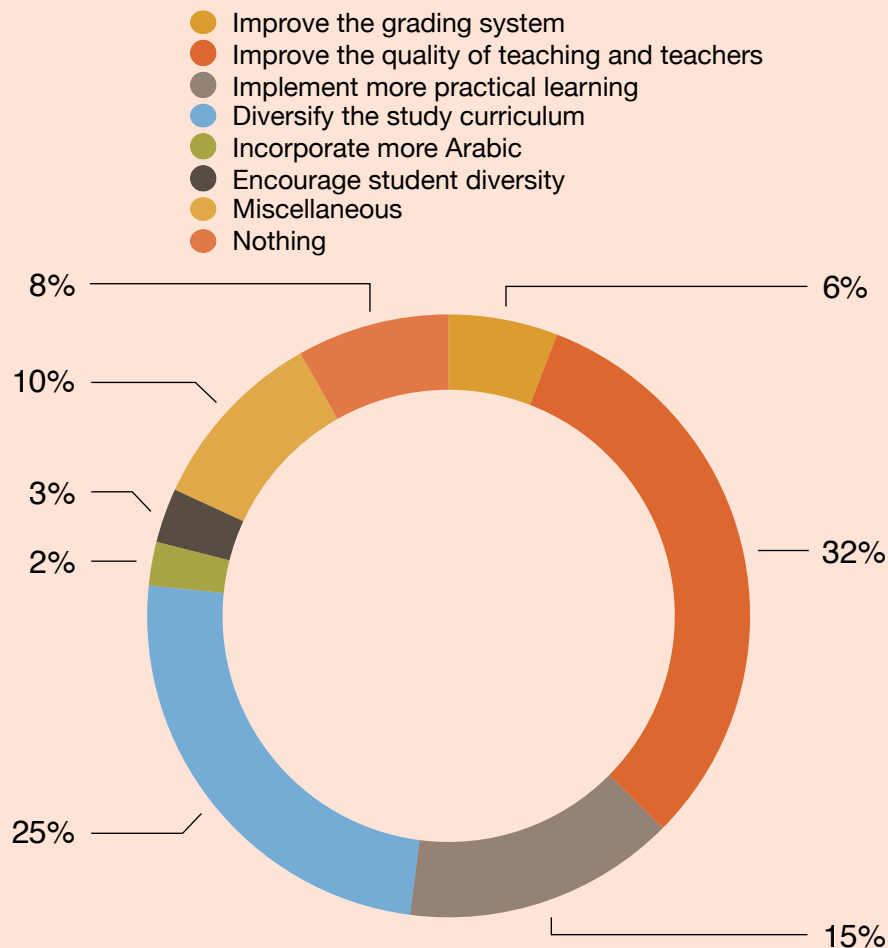
Question: How satisfied were or are you with the quality of education throughout your university experience?



It is evident that students that studied or study abroad are more satisfied than of those studying within private or public universities in Kuwait. As a matter of fact, 0 respondents who studied abroad described their university experience satisfaction level as “very dissatisfied”. As for the “very satisfied” response, 52.46% of respondents that studied university abroad selected the answer, in comparison with respondents that studied within Kuwait (approximately 32% of them answered with “very satisfied”).

Question: what would you choose to improve of your high school experience?

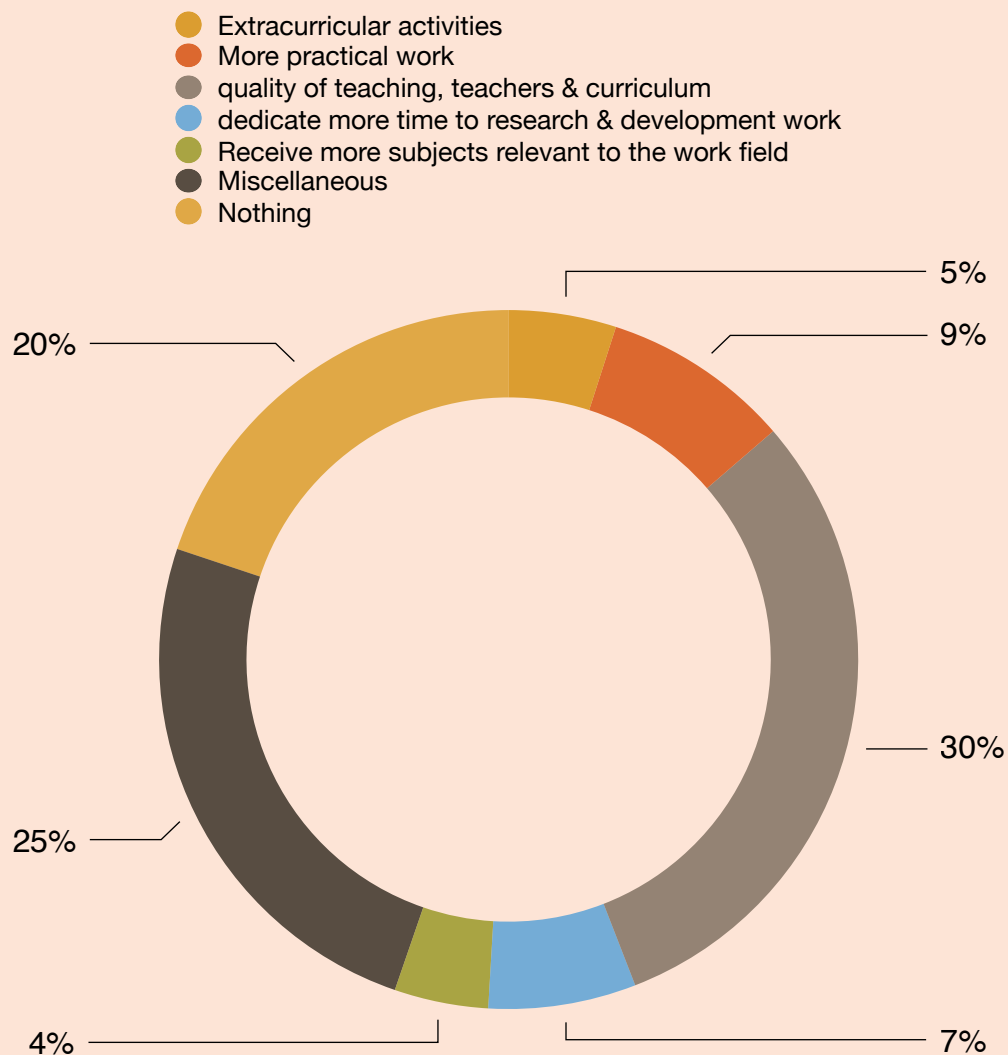
Responses to this answer were individually analysed, then **grouped** and categorised into the following: **improve the grading system; improve the quality of teaching and teachers; implement more practical learning; diversify the study curriculum; incorporate more Arabic; encourage student diversity; miscellaneous** and **nothing**.



Respondents mainly emphasised on improving the quality of teaching and teachers (32%), diversifying the studying curriculum (25%) and on implementing practical learning (15%). Responses that fell under the miscellaneous category included the improvement of the English language in government schools, paying more attention to arts and teaching human rights as a subject within schools.

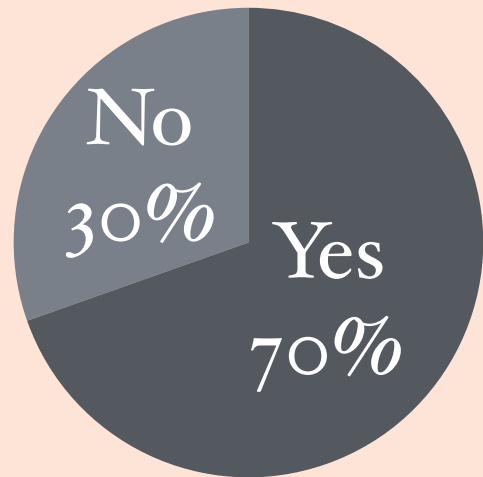
Question: what would you choose to improve of your university experience?

Responses to this answer were individually analysed, then **grouped** and categorised into the following: extracurricular activities; more practical work; improve the quality of teaching, teachers & curriculum; dedicate more time to research & development work; receive more subjects relevant to the work field; miscellaneous and nothing.



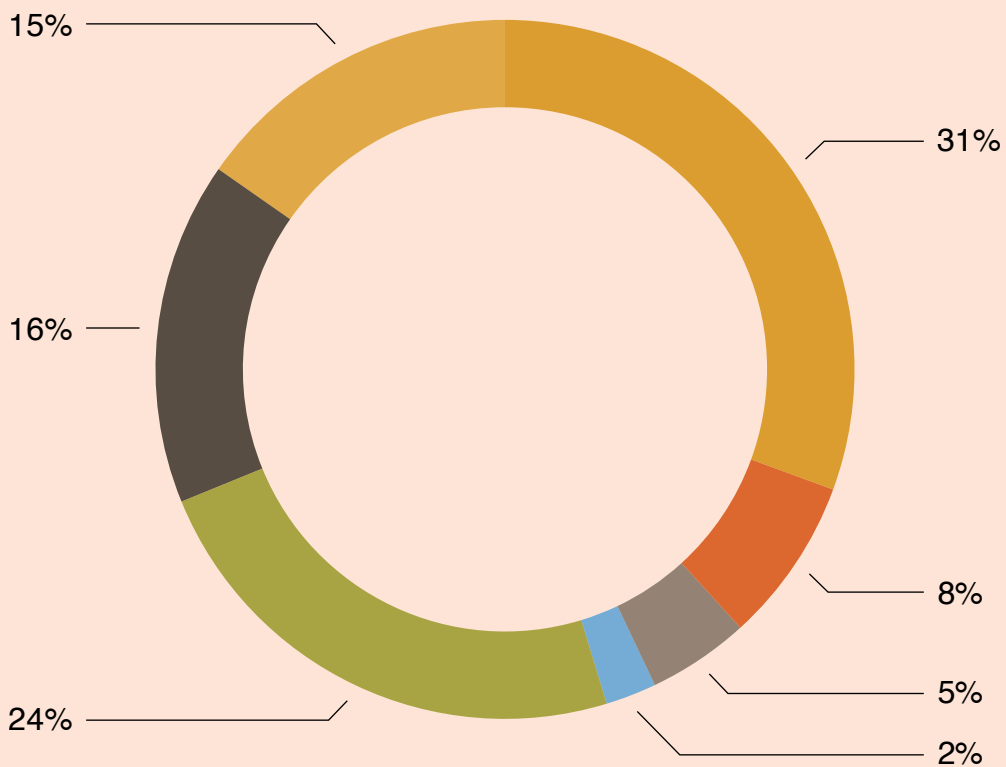
Respondents emphasised mainly on improving the quality of teaching, the teachers & curriculum (30%), implementing more practical work and less theory (9%) & encouraging more research & development based projects & curriculums (7%). Responses that fell under the miscellaneous category were extremely diverse and they could not be grouped. Answers included improving the aesthetics of the university buildings and facilities, encouraging more sports activities and introducing more up to date technology to universities.

Question: Following the recent prominence of “fake degrees” in Kuwait, do you feel directly disadvantaged by that fact?



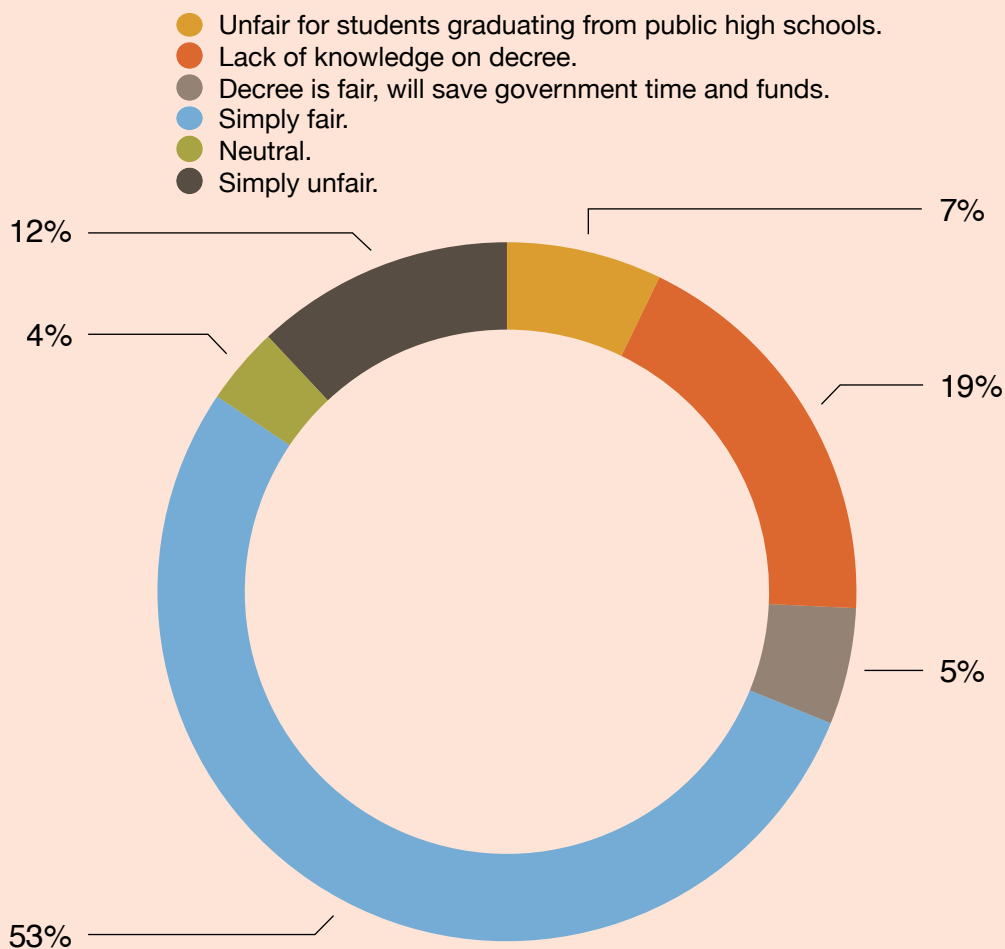
Question: Elaborate why you feel advantaged or disadvantaged by the recent prominence of fake degrees.

- Disadvantage for hard working people.
- Fake degrees affect the security & development of the country.
- Employment in Kuwait is not based on degrees.
- People can fake degrees but not skills.
- Due to corruption in the system
- No disadvantage whatsoever.
- Miscellaneous.



Responses to the previous question were grouped into the following categories: “fake degrees are a disadvantage for individuals that actually work hard on their studies”, “fake degrees affect the security and development of the country”, “fake degrees do not affect anyone because employment in Kuwait is not based in degrees anyways”, “people can fake degrees but not skills”, “fake degrees are a disadvantage and they are due to corruption in the system”, “I do not feel disadvantaged whatsoever” and miscellaneous. Respondents mainly symphazised with the fact that fake degrees affect hard working people that studied hard to get their degrees (31%). 24% of respondents recognised it as a problem emerging from the corruption in the system and 8% of respondents explained how it can be threat for the safety and security of the country. Those respondents used examples of having uncertified doctors, lawyers and other professionals actively working with very poor knowledge and big responsibilities.

Question: Do you believe the recent IELTS ministerial decree of 2018 is a fair approach towards improving the Kuwaiti education system? Elaborate.



On the 3rd of October 2017, the Minister of Higher Education issued a decree making it compulsory for all students seeking studies abroad via the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) Scholarship Program to obtain an **overall of 5.0 overall IELTS examination score** (a minimum score of 5.0 in each of the exams four sections that include listening, writing, speaking and reading) or its equivalent within the TOEFL examination. In June of 2018, The Court legitimised the Ministerial Decree and ruled that it was constitutional and not segregating between students across the country.

It has been stated that this decree will only come into effect as of the 2018 — 2019 MOHE scholarship plan, meaning students have already been given a heads up and have at least a year to prepare for such examinations if they are willing to obtain MOHE scholarship to study abroad. Following the public uproar against this decree that was mainly publicised in June of 2018 (mostly by members of parliaments and student bodies), the Minister amended the decree in which he made it possible to be accepted into the MOHE program without the required IELTS score. However, students will not be allowed to travel until they submit the required IELTS score (within a year).

53% of respondents to this report's question regarding the IELTS Ministerial degree found the decree as "simply fair", an extra **5% found the decree fair due to the fact that it saves the government time and funds**. MOHE stands that the decree is a requirement given the fact that the number of students unable to secure reasonable IELTS scores upon earning a MOHE scholarship abroad (3891 Kuwaiti students in the UK and U.S.A. were unable to secure IELTS/TOEFL results to progress to university between the years 2012—2017). Additionally, 1540 Kuwaiti students in the U.S.A. failed to obtain a university acceptance following their language year. **These collapses have cost MOHE 233 million USD over the previous five years.**

Most individuals that found the decree unfair justified their answers with claiming that the recent Ministerial IELTS decree made it harder for students coming from poor education systems to later obtain a scholarship to study abroad (7%). Some of the previously mentioned respondents further elaborated their answers claiming that it should be the government's role to give equal opportunities to all and to reinforce the teaching of the English language within public schools across all sectors of the country.

Data Collected from The Cross Cultural Diwaniya

Recently, on the 13th of August 2018, The Cross Cultural Diwaniya's discussion was hosted on "Improving the Quality of Education in Kuwait". Approximately 55 individuals attended and diverse topics that fell under the topic's umbrella were discussed. This following section will anonymously quote some of the participants that attended. Some of the following quotes have been slightly tweaked for anonymity and privacy purposes.

*"I am a teacher within a public school in Kuwait and unfortunately, **I never got interviewed when I applied for my job as teacher**, neither did many other teachers. This shows how corrupt and weak the public education system is in the country, standards must be put in place, perhaps make teachers take a specific examination to qualify."*

*"**Perhaps we should start a new education system in Kuwait** that for example, implements Japanese mathematics, a Scandinavian curriculum and other languages."*

*"Kuwait does not need a Scandinavian or Japanese curriculum, **it needs to see what the country and its students need**, where their weaknesses are and then generate a new curriculum and education system based on their needs."*

"We need to catch up on technology."

*"Kuwait, is a relatively new country, from my perspective and coming from an elder generation than the rest of you, we are very lucky to be where we are now, I think we have actually advanced and we keep on advancing everyday. Yes, there are problems in the system but all other countries do so too! **You are all young, and have incredible energies**, be useful with it and don't waste it. Don't complain, do something about it!"*

*"I have brought with me an example of an image from a book distributed within elementary schools ***shows attendees image of two kids, a boy and a girl on an iPad***, the description on top of the boy in the picture says Abdullah goes to the mosque and to school, the other description on top of the girl in the image of the little girl wearing hijab in the image says, Aisha obeys her brother Abdullah, how is this okay?"*

"I am a professor within a respectable university in the country, however from my perspective, it is the students themselves that do not want to study or get better education, all they look for is to pass everything, they try to find the easy way out of things and their main purpose for attending university is to simply get it over with and pass instead of indulging the course."

Final Thoughts

Although data collected for this report was mainly of public opinion, it can be said that individuals across the country believe that there is a lot of room for improvement within the education system in Kuwait, such as increasing the use of technology, improving the recruitment standards for teachers in the public system, and implementing a tailor-made system which specifically caters to the needs of the Kuwaiti students. It was additionally clear from our sample population that individuals that pursued their university degrees abroad were more content with their university experience than those who obtained or are obtaining their university degrees within Kuwait. Participants mainly emphasised on the need to improve the educational curriculum, procedures and quality of both the teachers or professors and their teaching skills. Within the Cross Cultural Diwaniya, ideas were brought up on how to set standards for teachers within public schools, and what new educational systems across the world we should start exploring and possibly implementing with adaptation depending on the needs of our students.

One of the main limitations for this report is the fact that it was difficult to identify which governorates as public education systems differ from governorate to governorate. It is for the official legal entities in charge of the education system within the country to improve the system with better standards, appropriate budgets and a study on what the students and country actually require. Nonetheless, as citizens and nationals of this country, it is also for us to aim for a better quality education for the upcoming generations and to make efforts, no matter how small, to improve it. We hope that this report helps give a better indication on the Quality of Education in Kuwait and what local residents believe is needed to improve it.

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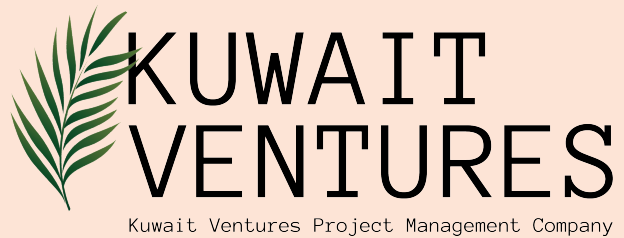
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