

Context-Relativity in Organizational Culture: The Case of the American University of Madaba

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Context-Relativity in Organizational Culture: The Case of the American University of Madaba

Master's Thesis

By

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Abstract

Organizational culture was originally addressed in the management literature in the late 1970s (e.g. Pettigrew, 1979; Deal & Kennedy, 1982). Scholars have later on extended the discussion to include higher education institutions (e.g. Tierney, 2008). However, the majority of the literature on organizational culture in higher education is based on institutions that follow and are placed within the Western model. Despite the lack of direct evidence, it is fair to suspect that there is a relationship between the culture of an organization and its national/regional context. This study investigates the nature of that relationship and provide real world examples through an in-depth case study on the American University of Madaba (AUM).

In evaluating AUM's organizational culture, this study explores the institution's organizational identity and its organizational design (the sum of the two, in this study, constitutes the culture of the organization). The data suggests that AUM's organizational identity holographically (Albert & Whetten, 2004) brings together four different identity pieces: American, Catholic, Jordanian, and not-for-profit. The study concludes that the institution's focus on its American identity and partial neglect in incorporating its other identity pieces into its organizational design with equal weight lead to a misalignment between its espoused, attributed, shared and aspirational organizational values (Broune & Jenkins, 2013), which ultimately leads to a misalignment between its organizational identity and its organizational design, resulting in what would be generally considered an unhealthy organizational culture (Gulua, 2018). In AUM's case, this misalignment causes an amended combination of what the literature presents as an expectation gap and a dislocation gap in organizational values (Broune & Jenkins, 2013). However, context-relativity (a crucial concept in this study), with its historical, economic, political, socio-cultural and colonial components, is highly impactful in studying the relationship between AUM's organizational culture and its national/regional context and impacts our understanding of the initial findings. This study reveals that there is a strong conception in the Middle East that American higher education = good quality (but good quality does not necessarily equal American). Therefore, in the light of context-relativity, AUM's organizational gaps and the misalignment between its identity and design is not a matter of unauthenticity, but rather lack of options. Being an American institution in the Middle East comes with a market advantage; therefore, such an approach is a way for AUM to survive in a world where global power dynamics carry strong preconceptions about the quality of American higher education. By being American "enough" to maintain its market advantage and being Jordanian "enough" to keep the peace with their students and staff and the surrounding community, AUM, as a young higher education institution, is finding a way to survive and advance its quality in the process.

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Introduction

Organizational culture was originally addressed in the management literature in the late 1970s (e.g. Pettigrew, 1979; Deal & Kennedy, 1982). Scholars have later on extended the discussion to include higher education institutions (e.g. Tierney, 2008). However, the majority of the literature on organizational culture in higher education is based on institutions that follow and are placed within the Western model. Despite the lack of direct evidence, it's fair to suspect that organizational culture is related to the national/regional context in which the organization exists, and that there is a relationship between the culture of the organization and that of the nation it lives within. This study aims to investigate the nature of that relationship and provide real world examples through an in-depth case study on the American University of Madaba (AUM).

AUM is an American, Catholic, not-for-profit higher education institution in Madaba, Jordan. With its unique and complex identities in its national context, AUM's organizational culture is explored in-depth in this study by dividing the concept of organizational culture into two sub-concepts: organizational identity and organizational design. The relationship of these sub-concepts is further investigated in connection with national/regional culture (See figure 1). In the process of this investigation, the concept of context-relativity is closely considered. Context-relativity with its historical, economic, political and socio-cultural components, is highly impactful in studying the relationship between AUM's organizational culture and its national/regional context.



Figure 1. An illustration of the research question and how major concepts in the study relate to each other.

Brief Overview of Higher Education in Jordan: Massification, the Rise of the Private Sector and the development of the Sector

Higher education in Jordan (also known as the Hashimite Kingdom of Jordan) started with the foundation of *Dar al-moualemeen* (an organization for teachers) in 1958 (Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, n.d). Until around the end of the 1980s Jordan's higher education was mostly elitist with a very expensive and selective university system, which was mostly confined to major cities (Janjua and Gaulee, 2019). The Kingdom then decided to expand its higher education system to the masses. The number of students in Jordan's higher education system thus increased 23-fold in 30 years starting in the 80s (Reiter, 2002). This massification raised the need for expansion in the higher education system, which was entirely public sector owned and operated until the end of the 1980s (Kanaan, Al-Salamat & Hanania, 2010).

Thus, the private sector emerged with the foundation of Al-Ahliyya Amman University as the first private university in Jordan in 1989. "The creation of privately owned universities was the response of the market to the mounting demand of students whose qualifications were not competitive enough to secure for them the subsidized seats in the public universities" (Kanaan, Al-Salamat & Hanania, 2010, p.30).

Due to a deliberate focus on higher education by the government and its intent to use higher education to create the next generation of leaders, more recently, Jordan has been going through a noticeable development in its higher education system (Janjua and Gaulee, 2019). For example,

King Abdullah the second, son of Al-Hyssain Al Mouazam has set forth a national strategic plan for human resources (2016-2025), which entails fair opportunities for qualified students, increasing quality in terms of research productivity and teaching, and stimulating a sense of responsibility for universities to address national goals (Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, n.d.).

Despite governmental efforts to develop the sector, a study by scholars (Janjua and Gaulee, 2019) concludes that there is a lot of room for improvement in the country's higher education sector. For example, Jordan has huge disparities between center and periphery in terms of access to quality education and admission into public universities (which is highly competitive, though sometimes students from the less privileged areas in the kingdom are accepted on the basis of a quota system) (Kanaan, Al-Salamat & Hanania, 2010; Reiter, 2002; Altbach, 2016).

As of 2019, Jordan had 10 public universities, 17 private universities and 51 community colleges (Janjua and Gaulee, 2019). This paper studies one of the country's private higher education institutions, the American University of Madaba.

Overview of the American University of Madaba

The American University of Madaba (AUM) is a non-profit, Catholic founded, American-style, four-year higher education institution located in Madaba, Jordan. It is the only American and the only Catholic university in the country. The Higher Education Council in Jordan granted a license to establish a new university in 2005. In 2009, the cornerstone of the university was blessed by HH Pope Benedict XVI in 2009. At the time, the school was called "Madaba

University”. After discussions regarding giving the university an American identity through American accreditation the name changed to American University of Madaba in 2011. As of 2019 AUM had graduated 1,065 students. It “draws upon religious, Jordanian and American values, cultures and education system” (American University of Madaba, n.d.). The university houses eighteen majors and seven faculties: engineering, science, health sciences, IT, art & design, business and finance, languages & communication.

AUM’s Catholic identity is rare in the Middle Eastern Region. It is one of six Catholic-identifying universities in the region, of which three are in Lebanon (Saint Joseph University of Beirut, Notre Dame University-Louaize, and Holy Spirit University of Kaslik), one in the Kurdistan Regional Government (Catholic University in Erbil) and one in the West Bank (Bethlehem University). The earliest Christian universities in the Middle Eastern region were established by the Copts in Egypt and administered through their Pope in Alexandria and in the fifteenth century, the French Jesuits started schools in Egypt, Lebanon, and Jordan (Cochran, 2011). Thus there is a heritage of Catholic education in the region, though the number of cases is relatively small.

Organizational “Culture”

Culture is the product of accumulated shared learning, or a shared pattern/system of *beliefs, ideologies, values, behavioral and rational norms, symbolic processes, credences, preference traits, attitudes, and sociohistorical experiences* that form a group’s characteristic through an interconnected set of assumptions (Shein, 2017; Bisin, Seror & Verdier, 2018; McKenna, 1992; Hofstede, 1980; Tierney, 2008). Hofstede (2011) warns against confusion with value differences at the individual level. He defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others” (p.3). The term *culture* is most commonly used for tribes or ethnic groups in anthropology, for nations in political science, sociology and management, and for organizations in sociology and management (Hofstede, 2011).

This phenomenon cannot be easily reduced to a few dimensions, as it is multifaceted and vital to our existence. Culture solves groups’ problems of external adaptation and internal integration and provides structural stability, depth, breadth, and patterning or integration (Schein, 2017). It “fulfills the function of providing stability, meaning, and predictability in the present but is the result of functionally effective decisions in the group’s past.” (p. 178)

This shared pattern/system has to have proved sufficient in solving the group’s problems to be considered valid. Once considered valid (and therefore the correct way to perceive, think, feel, and behave), it becomes taken for granted as a basic assumption and eventually drops out of awareness (Schein, 2017). It survives its members by being transmitted across generations by means of various socialization practices (Bisin, Seror & Verdier, 2018; Schein, 2017).

Therefore, saying something is “cultural” means that it is not only shared, but it is also somewhat stable.

Schein (2017) describes the “essence” of what culture really is as “the cultural DNA”, which is all that the shared pattern/system mentioned above consists of. “Cultural DNA” is hard to change because group members value stability as it provides meaning and predictability” (p. 10).

Similarly, **Organizational Culture** is a set of shared *values, beliefs, assumptions, practices, historical interpretations, symbols, and ideas of what it means to fail and succeed* that constitutes an organization and gives sense to what they do (Tierney, 2008; Elsbach & Stigliani, 2018). It is reflected in “what is done, how it is done, and who is involved in doing it [...] on both an instrumental and a symbolic level” (Tierney, 2008, p. 24), all of which uncover webs of significance within an organizational setting. “An organization’s culture, then, teaches people how to behave, what to hope for and what it means to succeed or fail” (Tierney, 2008, p. 86).

Organizational culture has been originally addressed in the management literature in the late 1970s (e.g. Pettigrew, 1979; Deal and Kennedy, 1982). Scholars subsequently addressed the topic in higher education institutions and underscored unique aspects of higher education such as shared governance, tenure track and others (e.g. Tierney, 2008; Clark, 1972; Kezar, 2005).

Some scholars (e.g. Kaul, 2018) believe that the overall culture of an organization (which includes its identity and design) must not drive strategy, as the former could limit and constrain the latter. Elsbach & Stigliani (2018) found that there is a recursive relationship between the

design of an organization/institution (strategies and patterns of day-to-day activities) and its culture (the set of beliefs it uses to give sense to what they do). Culture impacts the day-to-day activities and strategic plans implemented by the organization and vice versa. Therefore, although organization culture has many components, it is possible to consider culture as being a combination of two central concepts: organizational identity, and organization design.

Organizational Identity

Organizational identity is a statement of central character that distinguishes the organization on the basis of something important and essential (Albert & Whetten, 2004). It provides a framework needed by members of the organization to deal with existential issues of their own worth and meaning in the organization. A strong sense of identity serves two important purposes: it fosters cultural integration, and it directs organizational action (Schein, 2017). As a concept, organizational identity has two uses: the first is used by scientists to define and characterize certain aspects of organizations, and the second is used by the organization to characterize aspects of itself. General information about identity is often disseminated via official documents, such as annual reports and press releases. However, public identity can also be conveyed through signs and symbols (Albert & Whetten, 2004; Schein, 2017).

The identity of an organization is highly connected to its values. Just as personal values guide individual actions and judgements, organizational values play a guiding role in an organizations' functioning that is manifested through its identity (Schein, 1985). Bourne & Jenkins (2013) present four different types of values that organizations might have: espoused, attributed, shared and aspirational. Espoused values are those advocated by senior management. Attributed values

are those that members generally regard as representative of the organization. Shared values are an aggregation of the values of its members. Aspirational values are members' idea of what ought to be the values of the organization.

Organizations generally define who they are by creating or invoking classification schemes and locating themselves within them. However, precise self-classification may be both impossible and, more importantly, undesirable for a number of reasons, some of which are (Albert & Whetten, 2004):

- An overly precise self-classification might render an organization more predictable than desirable
- Most organizations are so complex that classifying themselves under one identity is impossible
- Since organizations change over time, a precise classification might quickly become outdated

An organization can have an identity that is composed of two or more identity types (Albert & Whetten, 2004). The first form of dual identity organizations is *ideographic*, whereby each internal unit exhibits only one identity (e.g, a bank that is operated by a religious organization). The second form of dual identity is *holographic*, whereby each internal unit exhibits the properties of the organization as a whole.

Organizational identity may be productively explored using the example of religiously affiliated institutions, which usually integrate religious values into the structure of their organizations. For

instance, the phenomenon of Catholic higher education in the United States (US) is hallmarked with international contribution to Catholicism in ways that benefit both the individual and the community. “Students, faculty, administrators, and other members of the Catholic campus find a particular environment that supports intellectual development and faith formation” (Galligan-Stierle & Moore, 2018, p. 354). Generally, mission education is a central feature for Catholic colleges and universities. "Mission education is a group endeavor and goes beyond individual institutions. There is an opportunity for religious orders to provide additional materials and learning opportunities about their order and its founder's charism" (Wenzel, 2013, p. 228). The mission of Catholic higher education institutions goes beyond the individual organization (Herrick, 2011). In the US, the first Catholic higher education institution was Georgetown University, which opened in 1792 (Galligan-Stierle & Moore, 2018). A significant part of being Catholic has to do with an organizational relationship with the structural authority of the Roman Catholic Church.

Organizational Design

The design of an organization is the process of developing and implementing corporate or institutional strategy, which refers to the establishment of organizational goals and the means by which they are achieved. It reflects the integration of structures, people, rewards and processes. It therefore concerns structures of accountability and responsibility, which are directly related to the day-to-day activities of people associated with the organization (specially those of senior management/leadership) (Simard, Aubry & Laberge, 2018; Elsbach & Stigliani, 2018; Buchanan & Huczynski, 2019). In higher education, three areas of organizational design come into play and directly influence the overall culture of the organization: pedagogical practices, teacher-student interaction, and faculty-faculty interaction (Tierney, 2008).

More often than not, the design of an organization ends up reflecting the outcomes of senior management's/leadership's decisions about its strategy (Tierney, 2008; Schein, 2017; Buchanan & Huczynski, 2019) as it related to their espoused values (Bourne & Jenkins, 2013). Successful organizations generally execute their organizational design in such a way that aligns or integrates internal and external adaptation issues. As mentioned in the Organizational Culture section, groups face two problems; one of internal adaptation whereby the group deals with human problems of collective life, and another of external adaptation whereby the group tries to adjust in order to adapt to external life. Studies have shown that successful performance in effective learning occurs in organizations due to thinking in terms of "socio-technical systems" (Schein, 2017). In socio-technical systems, the external and internal matters of an organization are at least aligned if not integrated. For example, a recent socio-technical design lab brought together a diverse group of academics, thinkers and practitioners to discuss the future of organizational design in relation to the relevant external environment (Pasmore, Winby, Mohrman & Vanasse, 2019).

Therefore, since the strategy, goals, means and structures of accountability in an organization are closely linked to leadership behavior, and because "leaders are catalysts for perpetual change" (Tierney, 2008, p. 17). Tierney suggests important characteristics or behavioral acts that are important in steering the organization in the right way.

- *Finding internal contradictions.* The culture of an organization and the enacted environment together usually result in contradictions between "what we do" and "what

we say”. For example, a college might say that they care about teaching skills of its faculty, but the road to tenure is paved with research publications.

- *Clarifying the identity to the institution.* Despite the challenges of having an overly precise self-classification, a clear identity fosters cultural integration and helps make more integrated organizational decisions, which direct cohesive organizational action. Dealing with existential issues would be easier with a clearer identity.
- *Acting on multiple changing fronts.* Having direct and preemptive action in many areas of the organization includes treating every problem as if it had multiple solutions, treating every solution as fleeting and taking into consideration changing environmental conditions, looking for consequences in unlikely places, and being aware of any solution that undermines strong values.
- *Communicating.* Using explicit and coherent communication methods to transfer knowledge about the identity of the organization to its members.

Indeed, with those considerations leaders are able to identify and assess how the existing culture aids or hinders the solving of organizational issues, thus they manage and direct the evolution of the identity of the organization (Schien, 2017). “Leaders need to understand the normal evolutionary change processes to be able to steer them” (p. 233).

It is important to acknowledge that while the literature on organizational culture, design and identity is helpful in framing this study, the majority of the literature is based on institutions that follow or are placed within the Western model. Therefore one indication of the present research

is that scholarly work on organizational behavior needs to be extended and critiqued to account for this Eurocentric orientation.

Context-Relativity

Based on the above description of culture, context-relativity manifests itself in differences in the process of shared learning and therefore, an entirely different agreed upon pattern/system of *beliefs, ideologies, values, behavioral and rational norms, symbolic processes, credence, preference traits, attitudes, and sociohistorical experiences*, as well as differences in the set of assumptions that form a group's characteristic. Context-relativity refers to the idea that "Contexts are structures that assign values to a variety of contextually variable parameters" (Gauker, 2010, p. 572). They play a critical role in understanding a given term; "What the meaning of a term is is itself a context dependent matter. [...] The entire meaning of a term varies from context to context" (Stanley, 1999, p. 17). These differences can start with nuances in certain terms between one context to another, but collectively, they can make up a different set of epistemological understandings that result in an entirely dissimilar culture in terms of human interaction. "It is a fundamental feature of symbolic interactionism that people cannot be separated from the contexts in which they exist" (Handberg, Thorne, Midtgaard, Nielsen, Lomborg, 2015, p. 2).

Context-relativity goes beyond mere behavioral differences; although it includes them. These differences have manifested in cross-cultural challenges between individuals, organizations and political regimes since before the 1980s. For example, Hofstede (1980) narrates a direct dispute between an American scholar (Mary Parker Follett) -who suggested depersonalization of the act

of giving orders in organizations. Follett believed that one person should not give orders to another- and a French scholar (Fayol), who called the idea “wrong and dangerous” because the unity of command was more sacred in France than in the United States. This dispute was related to the modern model of matrix management, “which was developed in the United States and, not surprisingly, is not popular in France” (p. 31). Similarly, Ali (1996) refers to the place of foundation of management theories (the US) as inextricably linked from the applicability of those same theories. While US-grounded theories have found a receptive audience worldwide, Ali seriously questions the relevance of these theories to foreign cultures, specifically in the realm of Organizational Development and applicability to organizations in the Arab world. He calls for developing an Organizational Development perspective that is relevant and effective in dealing with particular and peculiar cultural aspirations and programs, as direct application of American theories was found to be unviable. Academic research has even identified differences in practices between countries in the field of accounting (Perera, 1986), which is a measurement and processing heavy field and one would not expect to find cultural differences therein.

Even in the twenty-first century, in multinational organizations there may be greater variation between “the values of those working in the same organization but in different national locations than there is between the values of those working in different organization but in the same national location.” (Bourne & Jenkins, 2013, p. 501). Religious differences, for instance, incorporate differences in core values, beliefs, and credence, which, in turn, reflect differences in behavior, thought process, perception and feeling. For example, Sophia University in Japan and St. Paul University in the Philippines are both Catholic universities with a strong Catholic identity but since Catholicism is dominant in the Philippines and marginal in Japan, their

contexts are different and therefore, institutional choices are made accordingly and lead to structural differences (de Wit, Bernasconi, Hunter, James & Veliz, 2018). Additionally, studies on the effect of religious legitimacy as a general phenomenon in the history of political economy (Bisin, Seror & Verdier, 2018; Bisin, & Thierry, 2017) alludes that differences in religious views were a factor in the divergence that occurred between the Middle East and Western Europe.

In addition, political, economic, sociocultural and historical contexts influence the organizational culture of the organizations within these systems. For example, a study investigating organizational culture and effectiveness when American theory is applied in Russian organizations found that effectiveness in Russia relies more on adaptability and flexibility than in the US (Fey & Denison, 2003). Moreover, political and sociocultural aspects, such as the legacy of the Communist era in Russia, seemed to force firms to have a unique time perspective and a unique set of subcultures. Similarly, Klein, Waxin and Radnell (2009) found that national culture has some influence on the style of organizational culture in the United Arab Emirates.

Much of context-relativity, especially given the regional focus of this study (the Middle East), is due to the historical evolution of events and ideas that have formed certain power dynamics among those who are in (or from) the region, and those who are considered “Westerners”. Said (1978) refers to the first group as “Orientals”, who, from the Western point of view, have been defined as an irrational, weak non-European other. Two theoretical frameworks explain the phenomenon of historical power dynamic formation in the case of Western, colonial powers and the Orient. The first has to do with the Western patronizing representation of ‘the East’

(Orientalism (Said, 1978)), and the second relates to differences in epistemological experiences between the Westerners and the ‘Orient’.

The first framework, Orientalism, “connects the high-handed executive attitudes of nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century European colonialism” (Said, 1978, p. 2). Throughout history, the Orient has been defined by others making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, teaching it, and ruling over it. In short, colonialism served as a powerful tool in allowing the colonizers to define what kind of land, people, history, values and culture their colonies were. For instance, Said (1978) explains the British colonial mindset when occupying Egypt:

England knows Egypt; Egypt is what England knows; England knows that Egypt cannot have self-government; England confirms that by occupying Egypt; for the Egyptians, Egypt is what England has occupied and now governs; foreign occupation therefore becomes “the very basis” of contemporary Egyptian civilization; Egypt requires, indeed insists upon, British occupation (p. 34).

Thus, “the Orient and everything in it was, if not patently inferior to, then in need of corrective study by the West” (p. 41). The influence of this thought lasts up to the present. For example, the US still makes executive corrective decisions on behalf of the Middle East such as sending or withdrawing troops in snap decisions (Barnes & Schmitt, 2019) and making “peace plans” that entail favoritism (US White House, 2020). Said discusses this evolution in the presence of different Western powers, each with distinct goals and orientations: “From the beginning of the

nineteenth century until the end of World War II France and Britain dominated the Orient and Orientalism; since World War II America has dominated the Orient, and approaches it as France and Britain once did.” (Said, 1978, p. 4). Therefore, the relationship between Occident (West) and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination and of varying degrees of a complex hegemony through which the definition of the Orient is one that is set by the Occident.

The second framework is explained through Gertrude Bell’s perspective, being an English writer, traveler and political officer who influenced British imperial policy-making. Bell concluded that Arabs had centuries of experience but “no wisdom” (Said, 1978, p. 230). In addition to the fact that her writing was extremely collective “such as to wipe out any traces of individual Arabs with narratable life histories” (p. 229), Bell’s conclusion was based on a distinct definition of ‘wisdom’. Similar to Henry Kissinger, Bell believed that the developing world never went through the steps of uncovering empiricism as a worldview unlike ‘the West’. Said explains this perspective from the Western viewpoint: “We had our Newtonian revolution; they didn’t. As thinkers, we are better off than they are” (p. 47), with Newtonianism reflecting a philosophical and scientific doctrine inspired by the ideas of Isaac Newton. This orientation situates knowledge as consisting of recording and classifying data based on sequential logical reasoning, the more accurately the better. While the modern-day Middle East fully utilizes Newtonian thought, some would still say that because of the different process of exposure to the idea, it is possible that the set of ideas that form such a doctrine are embedded differently in the region than in the West. Indeed, in explaining the importance of contexts, Stanley (2003) stresses the idea of series of conditionals or the succession of conditions. Since the history of the two groups are not identical, it is reasonable to suspect that their epistemologies are different. Thus, the colonialist view that

“positive Western knowledge” had been increasing in size and accuracy was shattered with the realization that instead, it encompassed great “ignorance” in the Oriental mindset. However, “only the source of these rather narcissistic Western ideas about the Orient changed in time, not their character” (Said, 1978, p. 62). Therefore, when it was realized that ‘the Western way’ is not the only viable way, the developing world was seen as something that needs to be “contained”.

The two theoretical frameworks that explain the phenomenon of historical power dynamic formation in the case of Western, colonial powers and the Orient are highly connected. In fact, it is possible that the second framework has emerged, partly, as a result of the first. “The Orient was weaker than the West”, which “elided the Orient’s difference with its weakness” (Said, 1978, p. 204). Colonial history creates formidable structures of cultural domination. This comes with dangers and temptations for formerly colonized people to employ these structures upon themselves or upon others. “The cumulative effect of decades of so sovereign a Western handling turned the Orient from alien into colonial space” (p. 211).

Context-relativity (and its connection to culture) is often rejected by people, as it is common for people to feel uncomfortable or threatened by it (Hofstede, 1980). For example, Said (1978) writes:

All cultures impose corrections upon raw reality, changing it from free-floating objects into units of knowledge. The problem is not that conversion takes place. It is perfectly natural for the human mind to resist the assault on it of untreated strangeness; therefore cultures have always been inclined to impose complete transformation on other cultures,

receiving these other cultures not as they are but as, for the benefit of the receiver, they ought to be (p. 67).

Said's quote points out the existence of true differences between cultures in addition to the way the differences can be perceived by different cultural groups. Some surveys and studies have found dimensions that help distinguish core differences between different national cultures (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004; Hofstede, 2010; Minkov & Hofstede, 2012). Hofstede's cultural dimensions model has faced much criticism due to its differentiating nature (e.g. McSweeney, 2002; Shaiq, Khalid, Akram, 2011; Fang, 2003). However, studies have also found a level of general truth behind the model and have pointed out that different contradicting results could be reached if the studied sample size is relatively small in other studies (Eringa, Caudron, Rieck, Xie, & Gerhardt, 2015). Therefore, while it is not the overall rule, Hofstede's cultural dimensions are relevant, at least at a broad level. Its generalist nature serves the national cultural analysis in this study. That being said, some useful cultural dimensions into which nations can be categorized based on their differences are (Hofstede, 2010; Hofstede, 2011; Minkov & Hofstede, 2012):

1. Individualism vs. Collectivism (both institutional and in-group)

The two are opposites. Collectivism is the degree to which people in a society are integrated into groups. In collective cultures, people are found to be integrated, from birth onwards, into strong, cohesive in-groups, often extended families that continue protecting them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty, and oppose other groups. For examples, refer to table 1.

Individualism	Collectivism
“I” -consciousness	“We” -consciousness
Right of privacy	Stress of belonging
Everyone is supposed to take care of him - or herself and his or her immediate family only	People are born into extended families or clans which protect them in exchange of loyalty
Speaking one’s mind is healthy	Harmony should always be maintained
Personal opinion expected: one person one vote	Opinions and votes predetermined by in-group
Language in which the word “I” is indispensable	Language in which the word “I” is avoided
Purpose of education is learning how to learn	Purpose of education is learning how to do
Task prevails over relationship	Relationship prevails over task

Table 1. Examples of Individualism and Collectivism. Source: Hofstede, 2010.

2. Power Distance

This dimension refers to the extent to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. It suggests that a society’s level of inequality is endorsed by the followers as much as by the leaders. For examples, refer to table 2.

Small Power Distance	Large Power Distance
Older people are neither respected nor feared	Older people are both respected and feared
Student-concentrated education	Teacher-concentrated education
Hierarchy means inequality of roles, established for convenience	Hierarchy means existential inequality
Subordinates expect to be consulted	Subordinates expect to be told what to do
Pluralist governments based on majority	Autocratic governments based on co-

vote and changed peacefully	operation and changed by revolution
Corruption rare; scandals end political careers	Corruption frequent; scandals are covered up
Religious stressing equality of believers	Religious with a hierarchy of priests

Table 2. Examples of Small Power Distance and Large Power Distance. Source: Hofstede, 2010.

3. Gender Egalitarianism (Masculinity vs Femininity)

The two are opposites. As a societal (not an individual) characteristic, this dimension refers to the distribution of values between the genders which is another fundamental issue for any society. For examples, refer to table 3.

Femininity	Masculinity
Minimum emotional and social role differentiation between the genders	Maximum emotional and social role differentiation between the genders
Men and women should be modest and caring	Men should be and women may be assertive and ambitious
Balance between family and work	Work prevails over family
Both fathers and mothers deal with facts and feelings	Fathers deal with facts, mothers with feelings
Mothers decide on number of children	Fathers decide on family size
Religion focuses on fellow human beings	Religion focuses on God or gods
Many women in elected political positions	Few women in elected political positions

Table 3. Examples of Femininity and Masculinity. Source: Hofstede, 2010.

4. Tolerance for Ambiguity and Uncertainty

This is not the same as risk avoidance; “ it deals with a society’s tolerance for ambiguity. It indicates to what extent a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations. Unstructured situations are novel, unknown, surprising, and different from usual” (Hofstede, 2011, p. 10). Cultures that are

uncertainty avoiding try to minimize the possibility of uncertain situations by strict behavioral codes, laws, and rules, disapproval of deviant opinions, and a belief in absolute Truth; ‘there can only be one truth and we have it’. For examples, refer to table 4.

Weak Uncertainty Avoidance	Strong Uncertainty Avoidance
Tolerance of deviant persons and ideas: what is different is curious	Intolerance of deviant persons and ideas: what is different is dangerous
Teachers may say ‘I don’t know’	Teachers are supposed to have all the answers
In religion, philosophy and science: relativism and empiricism	In religion, philosophy and science: belief in ultimate truths and grand theories

Table 4. Examples of Weak Uncertainty Avoidance and Strong Uncertainty Avoidance. Source: Hofstede, 2010.

5. Future orientation (short-term vs. long-term)

This dimension is strongly correlated with economic growth. Long-term is when a society is collectively focused on the future, and short-term is when a society is focused on the present or the past and considers them more important than the future. For examples, refer to table 5.

Short-Term Orientation	Long-Term Orientation
Personal steadiness and stability: a good person is always the same	A good person adapts to the circumstances
There are universal guidelines about what is good and evil	What is good and evil depends upon the circumstances
Transitions are sacrosanct	Traditions are adaptable to change circumstances
Supposed to be proud of one’s country	Trying to learn from other countries
Students attribute success and failure to luck	Students attribute success to effort and failure to lack of effort
Slow or no economic growth of poor	Fast economic growth of countries up till a

countries	level of prosperity
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Table 5. Examples of Short-Term Orientation and Long-Term Orientation. Source: Hofstede, 2010.

6. Performance Orientation

Performance orientation refers to the degree to which innovation, high standards, and excellent performance are encouraged and rewarded.

7. Assertiveness

This dimension relates to interpersonal relationships and the level of their assertiveness.

For examples, refer to table 6.

High Assertiveness	Low Assertiveness
Value competition, success, and progress.	Value cooperation and warm relationships.
Communicate directly and unambiguously.	Communicate indirectly.
Expect subordinates to take initiative.	Expect subordinates to be loyal.
Build trust on the basis of calculation.	Build trust on the basis of predictability.

Table 6. Examples of High Assertiveness and Low Assertiveness. Source: Hofstede, 2010.

8. Humane Orientation

The dimension of humane orientation refers to the degree to which a society encourages and rewards individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring, and kind to others.

Based on this, it is fair to assume that, in the presence of cultural differences, the design of an organization is different, even if it claims to share a similar identity to an organization in a different cultural context. Moreover, since the design of an organization is found to extend its reach to ultimately influence organizational culture (Elsbach & Stigliani, 2018), and that

organizational culture is directly related to its identity (Schein, 2017), it is also possible for institutions that claim to have a similar identity to or share an institutional mission with those in different contexts to be different in reality.

While it seems conceivable that national cultures have an enormous effect on the cultures of organizations within them, in some cases, organizational culture can be so pronounced that it overcomes or supersedes national cultural differences. When Schein (2017) was invited by the US subsidiary manager of Ciba-Geigy to New Jersey to give a talk to top managers about what he observed in other international branches of their company, their reaction was “you have just described us”! “In some companies, the corporate culture is so strong and well embedded that the local offices in different countries look like and function exactly the same way as the headquarters organization” (Schein, 2017, p. 9).

Thus, according to this framework, in order to understand the organizational culture of the American University of Madaba, we need to analyze its organizational identity as well as its organizational design. In this analysis and comparison, the concept of context-relativity is taken into consideration as a historical, economic, socio-cultural and political phenomenon.

Methodology

This study investigates the organizational culture of the American University of Madaba (AUM) in relationship to the national culture of Jordan and the regional culture of the Middle East. It explores the ways in which AUM's organizational culture (organizational identity + organizational design) is affected by the national culture of the country and the regional culture of the Middle East as an American, Catholic, Jordanian and not-for profit higher education institution that has very unique identities in the Jordanian context.

In order to decipher an organization's culture, "we must try to understand the perceptions and feelings that arise in critical situations, and we must observe and interview regular members or "old timers" to get an accurate sense of the deeper-level assumptions that are shared" (Schein, 2017, p. 12). A critical population that needs to be interviewed, especially when exploring the design of the organization, is leadership (deans and senior administrators), as leadership is involved in the creation of the culture and at every stage of the organization's growth and maturity (Schein, 2017). Additionally, the perception of the student population is extremely important in order to see how the actions and decisions from the leadership translate.

Therefore, this case study uses mixed methods as a research design, in which two data collection instruments were applied: interviews and a survey. In reading and analyzing the data, this study uses interpretivism, which focuses on the way people make sense of their reality (McCann & Polacsek, 2018), and a qualitative and descriptive analysis. Qualitative analysis does not privilege the number of responses above the conceptual weight of emerging meanings (Shafer, 2012). A cross-analysis of all the data qualitatively, interpretively and descriptively gives a

comprehensive idea of the organizational culture of AUM and how it relates to its national culture and context-relativity.

Case Selection

For this case study, the American University of Madaba was selected based on its location and identity. As an American and Catholic university in the Middle East (and the sole one in Jordan in terms of both identities), AUM proved to be a good case through which this study's focus on context-relativity could be researched. Additionally, the willingness and hospitality of university personnel and leadership helped the study in terms of accessibility.

Data Collection and Analysis

Two data collection instruments were used to collect data for this study: interviews and a survey. Interviews were directed toward the leadership of the university, faculty and staff, and the survey was directed toward the entire student population. Data from the two instruments were analyzed with equal weight.

Interviews

This study involved a qualitative analysis of data from 13 interviews. Most of the interview data was collected on site in Madaba, Jordan during a site visit between January 6 and January 9, 2020. The remaining three interviews were conducted in Boston, Massachusetts. Senior Administrator 1 and Senior Administrator 2 were interviewed jointly.

Organizational culture is often deciphered through artifacts, espoused values and other forms that show how people in the organization perceive what goes on in their organizational environment (Hofstede, 2011; Schien, 2017). Thus, interviewees were asked a set of semi-structured questions through which their understanding of the organization's environment and operations became clear. Interviewees were asked about their daily routines, through which aspects of the current culture of the organization were uncovered. They were also asked to provide examples in respect to how they believe the culture of AUM is impacted by the national or regional culture. Further questions were intuitively asked based on how the conversations went. All interviews were recorded and transcribed manually. Most interviews were conducted in English, however many of them included some Arabic. See table 7 for interviewee titles, interview dates, and interview length. In order to protect the anonymity of participants further unnecessary demographic information, such as gender or nationality, will not be shared.

#	Interviewee label	Date of Interview	Interview Length
1	Senior Administrator 1	December 10, 2019	Joint –1 hr, 30 min
2	Senior Administrator 2	December 10, 2019	Joint –1 hr, 30 min
3	Staff Member	January 7, 2020	1 hr, 17 min
4	Faculty Member 1	January 7, 2020	25 min
5	Faculty Member 2	January 7, 2020	30 min
6	Faculty Member 3	January 7, 2020	42 min
7	Dean 1	January 7, 2020	42 min
8	Dean 2	January 8, 2020	19 min
9	Dean 3	January 8, 2020	32 min
10	Dean 4	January 8, 2020	15 min
11	Dean 5	January 7, 2020	7 min
12	Dean 6	January 8, 2020	18 min
13	International Liaison	February 6, 2020	30 min

Table 7. Interviewees’ titles and dates of individual interviews.

Survey

The survey was designed and distributed in English using Qualtrics, a software to create online surveys, it contained 23 questions (8 of which were open-ended) and received a total of 216 responses. It was directed toward the entire student population of the institution (around 1300 students). 42.39% of respondents identified themselves as male and 57.61% female. Most student respondents were from the Faculty of Business and Finance and none from the Faculty of Informational Technology and the Faculty of Languages and Communication (See figure 2). Additionally, most of the respondents were first year students (see figure 3). None of the survey questions were required to be answered, therefore different questions might have a different total number of respondents (n).

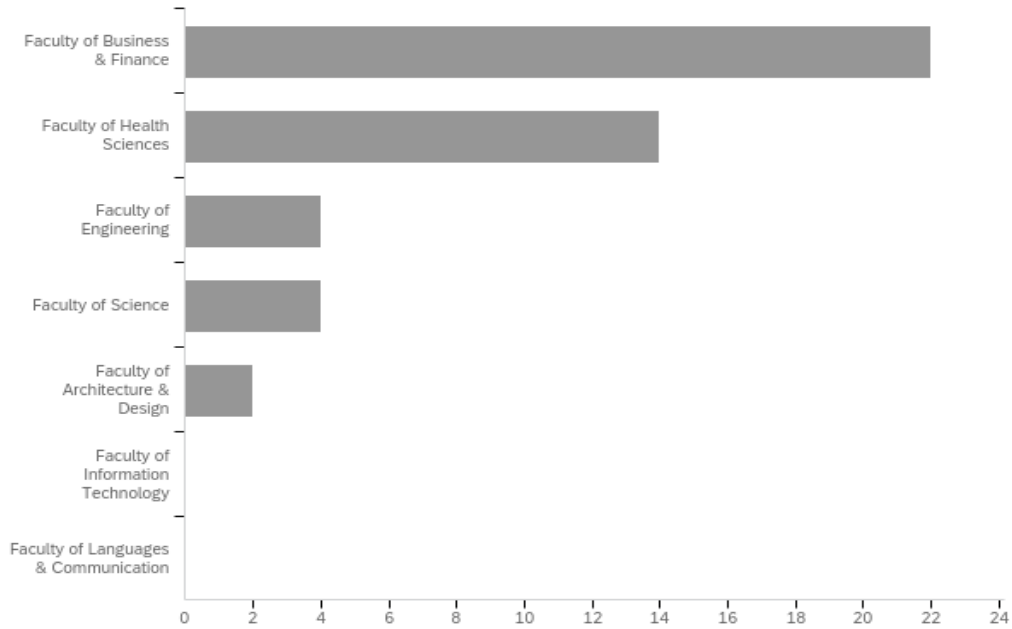


Figure 2. number of survey respondents as it connects to their faculty/department at the university.

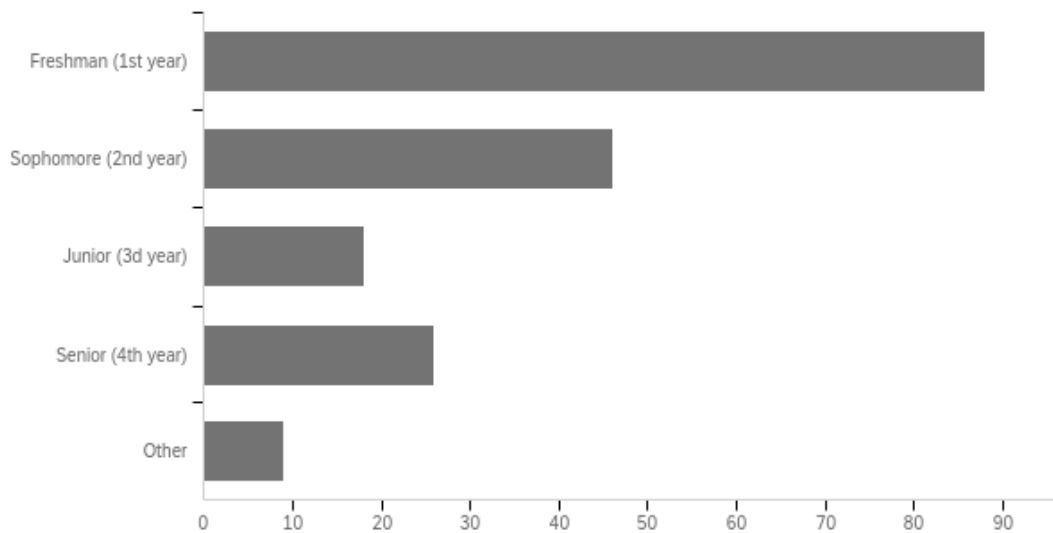


Figure 3. Data on survey respondents' class year.

Open-ended survey questions were coded qualitatively reducing answers to 13 to 17 codes depending on the question. Multiple choice survey questions were analyzed descriptively and quantitatively. Questions regarding religious and American identity were parsed by gender in order to demonstrate whether there were differences in self-reported data by this demographic variable.

Cross-Analysis of Data

The interview and survey data were cross analyzed using inductive reasoning to develop themes.

Interview and survey data was synthesized into fourteen codes as follows.

1. Increasing enrollment/attracting students
2. Accreditation/Quality
3. The strategic plan
4. Mission and values
5. Location
6. The crisis of acceptance
7. Uniqueness of AUM in Jordan
8. Faculty research
9. Students' backgrounds
10. National culture
11. Religious identity
12. Internationalization
13. Leadership
14. Demographics

Further coding was conducted on the open-ended interview questions and cross referenced with the codes from the interview to develop themes. An inductive analysis of the data collected were compared to a conceptual framework from the literature. Data findings were evaluated and re-considered using a post-colonial lens, informed by scholars such as Said (1978) and Hofstede (1980; 2010; 2011).

Limitations

As a context-specific case study, not all findings of this study can be generalized (Yin, 2017), though findings may be translated to other higher education institutions in the region and indeed in less economically developed world regions. In particular, American or Catholic identifying institutions in regions where those identities represent only a minority of the population may draw value from the findings presented herein.

Other possible limitations relate to myself as the researcher. My identifiable Armenian name appeared, for some interview participants, to be associated with a pre-conceived identity and a positive relationship with the overall Christian community of Jordan, and might have slightly impacted the nature of communication with some of the interviewees. Additionally, as a researcher with a personal background in the Middle Eastern region, but not specifically in Jordan, my interpretation of certain cultural events in the community could have been based on my past experience and not solely what I gathered from my time in Jordan. Although, my familiarity with the regional culture as well as the Arabic language gave me an advantage.

While none of the interviews were conducted entirely in Arabic, parts of certain interviews were. Additionally, my interaction with members of the community during my time on site was almost entirely in Arabic. Through interactions with members and observations of their interactions amongst themselves, aspects of the organization's environment and culture were discerned. In a few instances of language interpretation and translation from Arabic, I may have made choices that influence findings. To address this (and further interpretation issues that do not directly relate to language, as the count of those instances was small), a copy of interview transcripts was shared with interviewees including translations and a confirmation was received from most participants. 4/13 participants did not corroborate with an email by the communicated deadline.

Other interpretive limitations in the study are related to the survey. The survey was distributed in English, and most (all except two) responses to open ended questions were in English. In some instances, some survey responses were incomprehensible, raising the question of whether student respondents had understood the question correctly. Those instances were exclusively present in

the open ended questions (8/23 questions). They did not exceed the amount of error expected in a study (Eifler & Petzold, 2019). They were additionally coded as “N/A” and removed from the analysis in order to refrain from impacting the findings negatively. Furthermore, the while the student sample responding to the survey included students from all years of study, 47% of respondents were first year students. The strong first year representation may have influenced the data.

Ethic and Consent

Initial Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was granted for this study by Boston College on November 22, 2019. The survey was designed after the site visit for a more informed design; approval for the survey was granted on January 14, 2020. The IRB application included separate Informed Consent Forms for the survey and the interview. All interviewees received a printed copy of the Informed Consent Form before the interview, they were given time to read it and the opportunity to ask questions. Signed copies of the Consent Form were sent to the interviewees after the interview for their reference. Similarly, survey participants were presented an Informed Consent Form as the first question of the survey. An electronic signature to the Consent Form was required for further completion of the survey.

*A Description of AUM's Organizational Culture
(based on interview and survey data)*

Based on the literature review above on the concepts of organizational culture and context-relativity, in order to evaluate the culture of the American University of Madaba (AUM) and its relationship to context-relativity, this chapter divides it into organizational identity and organizational design and conducts a deep analysis.

AUM's organizational Identity

AUM's overall identity as an organization is built up of different pieces in a holographic fashion, whereby each internal unit exhibits the properties of the organization as a whole (Albert & Whetten, 2004). Its identity can be divided into American, Religious, Jordanian and Not-for-profit.

AUM's American Identity

A search of AUM's website and corresponding documents such as annual reports creates the impression that 'American' is the most important identity to AUM. AUM's American identity is multi-layered, and it is best explained through dividing it into four parts: marketing, cost, quality of education, and accreditation.

Marketing

Both the Staff Member and Senior Administrator 1 described the American identity of the university as a “unique selling point (USP in marketing)”, which explains a pattern in successful advertising campaigns. Senior Administrator 1 said that the American model is likely to succeed anywhere in the Arab world in terms of marketing “So, I know that if you seek proper American style education, it will succeed”. Indeed, the Staff Member I interviewed confirmed that in marketing the university, they never speak of its Christian identity, seldom speak of its non-profit identity and strongly emphasize its American identity. In the Middle East, similar to some other parts of the world, being an American university has an important marketing aspect, as it is perceived as being prestigious and of good quality. This is related to the concept of context-relativity, specifically its colonial and power dynamic aspect.

Cost

Despite university efforts to move toward equal access, AUM’s American identity gives it a luxurious image. For example, most of the comments on the university’s online marketing campaigns are along the lines of “I need to sell my car/house to study at AUM” or “my parents are not congressmen and therefore I cannot study there” (Staff Member). This is generally the case in the Middle East with American universities/schools. “The name American gives an impression that the university is really high cost and whoever comes to this university has the golden parachute and that your parents are basically rich, and anyone who goes there is coming from [the generally prosperous area] Western Amman” (Staff Member).

While prices (credit prices as well as registration fees (see tables 8 and 9)) are not low at AUM, especially compared to other national universities, its American identity could sometimes project a skewed perception upon the community. Although most students studying at AUM come from affluent backgrounds and having had an expensive secondary education, the university is making efforts to serve lower income applicants, those from the peripheries of Jordan, and local low income students from Madaba. Despite the organizational challenges that changing the student demographics could cause the university (i.e. financial), “it is the healthy way to do things, and the right way” said Senior Administrator 1. For example, on March 18, 2013 AUM adopted a Non-Discrimination Policy stating that it prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, physical disability, or veteran status in its recruitment, admissions, employment, evaluation, and advancement policies (American University of Madaba, n.d.).

Program	Tuition Fees	
	JD/credit hr. Jordanian	USD/credit hr. Non-Jordanian
Faculty of Engineering		
Civil Engineering	150.00	255.00
Electrical Engineering	120.00	210.00
Mechanical Engineering	120.00	210.00
Faculty of Science		
Biology & Biochemistry	70.00	140.00
Faculty of Health Sciences		
Medical Laboratories	100.00	180.00

Nutrition and Dietetics	70.00	140.00
Pharmacy	130.00	225.00
Faculty of Information Technology		
Computer Science	100.00	180.00
Faculty of Business and Finance		
Accounting	110.00	200.00
Business Administration		
Banking and Finance		
Marketing		
Risk Management		
Faculty of Architecture and Design		
Architecture	150.00	255.00
Interior Design	125.00	220.00
Graphic Design	125.00	220.00
Faculty of Languages and Communication		
English Language and Literature	90.00	170.00
Translation		

Table 8. AUM's tuition fees per credit hour in Dinars as well as USD for foreign students per study program.

Registration Fees	First time Registration		Fall Semester		Spring Semester		Summer Session	
	JD	US \$ *	JD	US \$ *	JD	US \$ *	JD	US \$ *
Application Fee	40.00	57.00	-	-	-	-	-	-
Admission Fee	150.00	212.00	-	-	-	-	-	-
Deposit (Refundable)	150.00	212.00	-	-	-	-	-	-
Placement tests (Three tests)	120.00	170.00	-	-	-	-	-	-
Registration Fee	-	-	250.00	357.00	250.00	357.00	125.00	180.00
Service Fee	-	-	175.00	250.00	175.00	250.00	87.50	125.00
Health insurance	-	-	50.00	71.00	50.00	71.00	25.00	36.00

Table 9. AUM's additional fees (e.g. registration, admission, health insurance...etc.).

Thus, while AUM is comparatively high cost, the university is making efforts to serve lower income applicants, those from the peripheries of Jordan, and local low income students from Madaba.

Quality of Education

In parallel with high cost, the association of American higher education with high educational quality is a dominant perception in the region. It is highly improbable for anyone (especially those from the region itself) to talk about higher education in the Middle East without mentioning quality. It seems as if an idea has historically been established; that the quality of higher education in the region is inferior -especially compared to 'the West'. Therefore, there is an entrenched, negative association with local education. This perception of research participants is also reflected by publications in the region including the Arab Human Development Report (2002), which described poor quality as "the Achilles heel" of education in the Arab world, and a report by the

Association of Arab Universities (2008) that framed quality assurance at Jordanian universities one the main challenges of the sector.

In an open-ended survey question, 13 out of 89 students, directly connected AUM's American identity to high quality. Thus, its American identity has an extremely positive impact on its reputation and perception of quality. For example, the Staff Member who graduated from AUM a few years ago said "When you go to the market and you want to get a career, the name of the university helps a lot. When I tell people that I went to AUM they go like "oh wow". When I got my first job interview, they asked me where I studied and when I said AUM, they immediately told me I was hired. This was in Amman. Because when they know you went to AUM they think "okay, he speaks fluent English, he has a good education, we can use him for our advantage. I think it's a general perception, but it's working."

Accreditation

Background on AUM and American accreditation

Pursuing an American identity for AUM was an early idea that started with the appointment of the first president of the university who had a Palestinian and Jordanian background with ties to the US. At that time, the university had a different name. The idea was for the institution to develop its American identity specifically through full American accreditation, and to model itself after the American University of Beirut and the American University of Cairo. "There was an idea that they wanted to reflect an international capacity as a college, but in the model of American higher education" (International Liaison).

At the time of the decision to pursue full American accreditation, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges was selected as the accreditation organization to pursue accreditation through. The accreditation organization went through a name change and is currently known as the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE). NECHE was selected in 2009 (Senior Administrator 1) because they had accredited other international affiliate institutions, whereas other accreditation agencies had not (International Liaison). Being fully accredited by NECHE is a long process. International institutions seeking accreditation by the commission need to be independent, American-style, with a specific kind of educational mission and program and are required to maintain transparency (NECHE, 2019). Under “American-style” it is clearly stated that a university seeking accreditation must publicly declare its American identity. This could be done through its name, mission statement, catalog or other declarations and actions that reflect the commitment. Based on this requirement, the name of the university was changed to “American University of Madaba” in 2011, before which it was called Madaba University (Senior Administrator 1; International Liaison).

Based on NECHE’s accreditation requirements, it quickly became clear that as a brand new university that had just opened its doors, accreditation was a long way down the road (International Liaison). However, the process could start, as NECHE has three steps that lead to full accreditation for free-standing (non-governmental) institutions abroad: eligibility, candidacy, and initial accreditation (NECHE, 2019). The three steps, however, are arduous; even the first step requires a lot of time and many efforts from the institution in order to prove its eligibility (currently, AUM is still in the process of completing the first step. In March 2020, NECHE will be considering AUM’s eligibility report).

Therefore, it was decided that the beginning of the process would be “going through practice, but real steps; by establishing the institution in one of the state systems” (International Liaison). The state system of New Hampshire was picked by a former president. AUM then finally got its degree granting university status approved by the state of New Hampshire in 2013. This accomplishment included a legislative process of working with senators of the state to introduce a bill to the state legislator (International Liaison). Now, in 2020, AUM’s New Hampshire degree granting status seven-year term is coming to an end. Luckily for AUM and the International Liaison, who is mainly involved in on-the-ground work of this accreditation process, the re-accreditation does not need a new bill to be introduced. Rather, it requires a peer-review team that does a study on campus and decides whether to approve or deny the re-accreditation for another term (International Liaison).

While a different process, the recognition of AUM as a degree granting institution in New Hampshire is contingent on its progress toward granting full federal (NECHE) accreditation. Once NECHE accreditation is reached (which will be in about eight years from 2020 based on an estimate from Senior Administrator 1), New Hampshire will be solely dependent on how NECHE evaluates AUM (International Liaison).

Current perceptions regarding the accreditation process

Overall, interview participants had a positive perception of the process of seeking full American accreditation. The International Liaison believes that “currently, there seems to be a good energy, commitment, coordination between the board and the university administration, New Hampshire is really happy with how things are moving along, we

are making progress with NECHE.”. Senior Administrator 2 directly and explicitly connected accreditation with academic excellence and stressed the importance of the process. They said that “the upper level management of the university and the sponsor are completely aware of the importance of granting “the best”, and “the best” cannot be realized unless through accreditation or an excellent level of education, which is the American level”. Most interviewees shared similar opinions in regard to accreditation describing it as a “crucial” or an “important” stage.

AUM’s Religious Identity

Catholic higher education is generally defined as “colleges and universities affiliated with the Roman Catholic faith, generally through founding by a Catholic religious order of priests, sisters, or brothers, or through affiliation with a Catholic diocese” (Galligan-Stierle & Moore, 2018, p. 350). AUM is the only university in Jordan with a Catholic affiliation. Catholic higher education is a rare phenomenon in the region as a whole. On February 6, 2020, AUM’s International Liaison shared their involvement with another notable Catholic university in the region as their first phase of involvement in Catholic higher education in the Middle Eastern region. “This all began in 1997, when I first started working in the Holy Land region”. That is, Bethlehem University, the only Roman Catholic institution of higher education in the West Bank, established in 1973 with roots tracing back to 1893 (Kelley, 1998).

The De La Salle Brothers (also known as Brothers of the Christian Schools) took over the administrative tasks of founding Bethlehem University in the Holy Land. Initial funding came from Rome, the Catholic Near East Welfare Association in New York, and from German Catholics of Misereor and the Knights of the Holy Sepulcher (Kelley, 1998). The International

Liaison explained that in Boston (for instance) the Catholic Church is coordinated by the Archbishop, whereas in the Holy Land (an area located between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea that also includes the Eastern Bank of the Jordan River), it is coordinated by the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem who runs the Patriarchate. The establishment of Bethlehem University in the West Bank was the Patriarchate's project. Later on, "the Latin Patriarch had this idea that because of the political situation, the occupation of the West Bank, and the severe limitations in Bethlehem University [...], we needed to come up with a Plan B. And Plan B was possibly establishing a new Catholic university in Jordan where there is much more freedom of movement, but other challenges too..." (International Liaison). Similar to the steps prior to the establishment of Bethlehem University, there were feasibility studies to inform the patriarchate about the success chances for this project, the means and methods by which it can be achieved, and what the institution would look like. As a result of these studies "the Vatican supported it, the Patriarchate wanted to move ahead and the project started to take shape". Thus, the initial steps of AUM's establishment were realized. However, despite the comparative freedom of movement with the West Bank, having a Catholic university in Jordan came with its own challenges. One notable challenge is the crisis of acceptance.

The Crisis of Acceptance

The crisis of acceptance in this study refers to the phenomenon of the difficulty that the Jordanian community/the Jordanian public had in accepting the Catholic identity of the university. It relates back to groups' fundamental problem of external integration (Schein, 2017). "[AUM] was scrutinized intensely as it was thought/assumed/accused of being a missionary university despite the fact that it is -beyond any doubts- an academic institution that aims at advancing knowledge and research in Jordan" (Sawalha, 2018, p. 2). Dean 3 said, "from the

outside, people are not very comfortable with the idea. They think that there will probably be some sort of influence”. Senior Administrator 1 explained that “when the university was first inaugurated the concept was among the local community that this is a university that is coming to convert us into Christianity and they refused it and did not want to send their children”. Senior Administrator 2 also referred to this phenomenon as “the challenge of the community” (translated).

Dean 3 connected the crisis of acceptance to the Catholic ownership of the university saying that it is “problematic within different cultures and countries religions and backgrounds [...] in terms of acceptance of a Catholic university in a non-Christian community or country”. It seems that although “Jordan prides itself with this kind of fellowship between different religions”, “it’s kind of like a quid pro quo”. While Christians in the country are allowed to have their own customs and holidays, for example pork products specially made for them in contained packages, “Christians can’t go and impose themselves” in the country (Faculty Member 3). Therefore, due to the crisis of acceptance, AUM has taken a very moderate position on religion. “Yes, it’s affiliated with the Catholic Church and the Vatican and so on, but it tries to come across with a more secular identity” (Faculty Member 3). For example, there are no chapel or prayer rooms on campus.

Thus, AUM’s response to the crisis of acceptance has been in the form of a moderate self-representation when it comes to its religious identity. “It is not framed as Catholic inside the community because of the culture itself and the rules of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research ... they will not accept having a Catholic and Christian identifying university]” (Dean 6). Indeed, many of the interviewees believed that although the university is established by the Latin patriarchate and is with a Catholic affiliation, “it is just a normal

university” the ultimate goal of which is to provide quality education to all members of the community. Its goal is not to evangelize or preach (Dean 1; Dean 3; Faculty Member 3). For example, Faculty Member 2 shared that although “in some universities [in Jordan] religion is a barrier”, “not in AUM 100%”. They referred to the low number of Christian faculty members (4 or 5 out of 30). “If this was an aim for religion to be a major thing, then it would be [different]”.

When asked whether they were aware of the Catholic identity of AUM, only a small number of current students (22/162 or 13.58%) indicated that they were not (see figure 4). This small percentage points both to a secular operational approach, which might leave a small number of students unaware of the institution’s religious identity, it does, however, also suggest that its religious identity is more salient than one would tell from observing institutional operations.

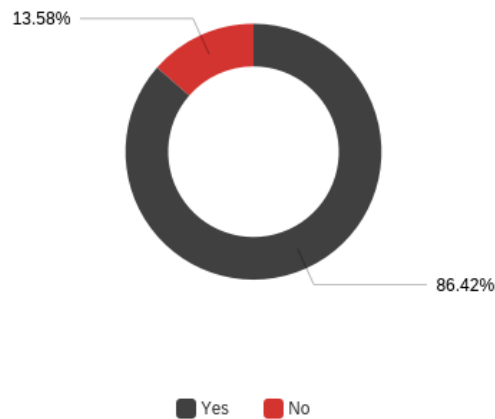


Figure 4. Survey response illustration to the question “Are you aware that AUM is a Catholic founded institution?”.

Hence, despite this secular approach, AUM’s religious identity is a part of its holographic identity. The establishment of an organization is the pith of its life. Therefore, AUM’s Catholic identity in terms of ownership clearly has a great impact on its existence. For example, Dean 3

shared that although in their 2.5 years at AUM they have not encountered any direct impact of Christianity in institutional operations, the university does help the local Christian community. So, you'll find many employees of the university are from the local Christian community. Which is fine, I believe it is fulfilling its objective". Moreover, "because it's a Christian university, the higher ups tend to be Christian" (Faculty Member 3). Faculty Member 3 went on to say that they understand the rationale behind this practice, as they are dealing with the patriarchate and the Vatican and they want to have strong representation. In addition, the mission of the university mentions its Catholic identity and says that AUM derives its values from Catholic, Jordanian and American values.

AUM's Jordanian Identity

As an institution established and located in Madaba, Jordan, AUM's identity is clearly influenced by its national and regional culture. "At AUM you don't just see the typical culture of other Jordanian universities. You'd see you a mix of Jordanian and Westernized. I've lived in different countries, and I can sense that... When I walked into this university I was like "is this Jordan?" for a second" (Faculty Member 2). The interview data suggests an overall reciprocal relationship between the influence of the region and country on AUM and that of AUM on its location: specifically, the city of Madaba.

National and Regional Influence on AUM

Collectivism is 'Strangling' the Institution and Creating a large Power Distance

Staff Member and Faculty Member 3 both, on different occasions and as a response to different questions, circled back to mentioning the collective nature (Hofstede, 2011) of Arab culture in general. They pointed out the cycle of life that one is expected to lead and how it is connected to the important relationships that are formed. “You know you’re not doing things for yourself... you do things for your father, or your grandfather. It’s to honor the family.” And honoring the family in that culture comes in limited forms. “It’s a cultural kind of expectation now, or norm, that it needs to sort of be a science. Science and medicine are on top of the hierarchy when it comes to what we think our children should do. And becoming a doctor or an engineer and making a lot of money brings honor to the family and anything else is considered suspicious or useless or too foreign to us, and therefore rejected.” Faculty Member 3 went on to give a contemporary example of this situation and how it reflects on the society. Psychology, they said, is generally frowned upon due to a stigma around mental health in general. “So, being a psychologist here (or even a sociologist) just seems to be unacceptable. Although we need them. Psychiatrists, you can’t even get an appointment with them, you need six months to get an appointment and they charge 50 JDs an hour. There is high demand for them currently, but because there is so much stigma and taboo to open up that field in this part of the world there is a dearth of them” (Faculty Member 3).

The collective nature of the regional and national culture additionally became evident through the “we” consciousness versus the “I” consciousness of the interviewees. With the exception of questions asked directly about their personal experiences (usually abroad and before joining AUM), when asked about university operations, all interviewees seemed to have a “we” consciousness when it comes to their role within AUM. This relates back to the loose structuring of the organization and the dearth of human resources. In the Arab world, “members of

organizations or a community develop close personal relationships and a strong knowledge of each other.” (Ali, 1996, p. 10). This socialization aspect is looked at very differently in the US, where socialization is often an intentional goal of organizational development. Rather, in the Arab world, it seems to have an opposite effect on organizations as it forces relationships to prevail over tasks (Hofstede, 2011). Faculty Member 3 believes that people in the region, country, as well as at AUM do not realize that business is business. They pointed out the strong emphasis and importance associated with what one’s last name is and what one’s religion is. This feeling of collective belonging is very natural to Arab communities “it goes back to tribal culture” said Faculty Member 2. Both Faculty Member 2 and 3 pointed out that relationships between people in the organization are highly “Jordanian”. “To me, if there is a rule, if there is a standard, you stick with it and then who cares... if you can’t adhere to it, you’re out. This to me is very American and it works in organizations, it makes them efficient” (Faculty Member 3). Through stories, interview participants explained that in the region in general exceptions in organizational rules and regulations are commonly made for the sake of personal relationships and in a way to protect one self and their belonging. “They strangle the institutions, and this place is impacted by that culture” (Faculty Member 3). This collectivist behavior therefore leads to large power distance (Hofstede, 2011) by making it normal to make exceptions in the rules and regulations of an institution. Therefore, corruption becomes the norm and scandals are covered up frequently.

Challenges Regarding Values and Religion

Religion (Islam) is an influential force in the Arab world (Ali, 1996). The Law of Higher Education and Scientific Research No. 23 (2009) states “deepening the Islamic faith” and

“enhancing the sense of the national belonging” as one of the aims of higher education in the country (p. 1). Despite AUM’s moderate and welcoming approach to diverse populations and ideas, its organizational identity as a Catholic institution requires certain values to be associated with its organizational design. Religion, as an influential force as well as the unity of “church and state” in the Arab world, separating organizational identity and culture could become a challenge, especially when the national religious force is different from that which the institution follows. Senior Administrator 1 said “we want the university to engage in a positive manner in other people’s religion, without having their convictions being imposed on us. We do not impose our conviction on them and we do not allow the opposite”.

AUM’s Influence on Madaba

Madaba is in a remote area of Jordan. Senior Administrator 1 explained that Madaba is where “John the Baptist used to wear camel fur and eat wild honey, so, exactly this is AUM -it is an area that is highly deprived. Yet, it is full of culture and history”. Senior Administrator 1 added that they “struggle to get students because of location, however MoUs [the overall American identity] helps attract students despite the location”. Indeed, when asked whether the location of AUM is convenient for them, 40.12% of the respondents chose “no” and 39.53% chose “somewhat” (See figure 5).

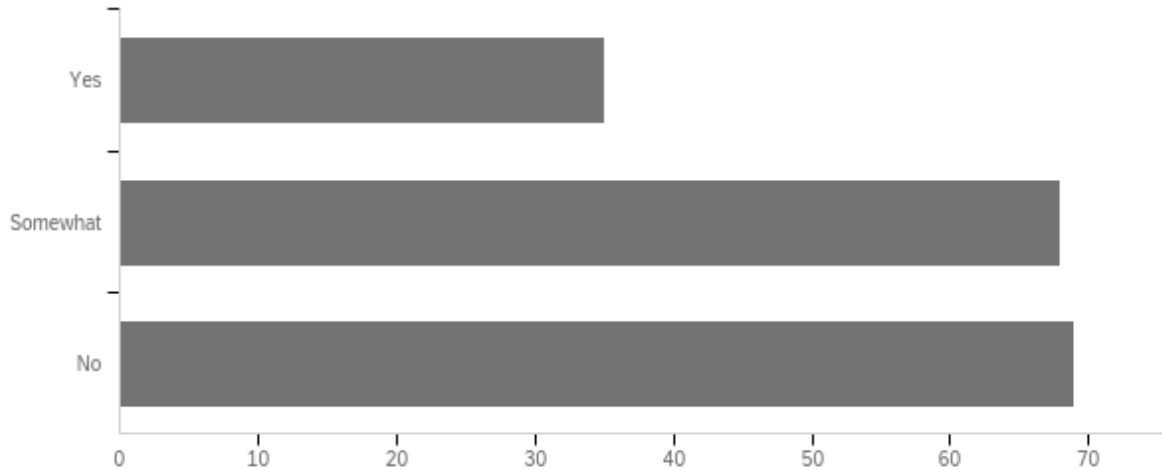


Figure 5. Survey response illustration to the question “Is the location of AUM convenient for you?”.

Most of the students who attend AUM are from Amman, the capital of Jordan. Around 49% of respondents to the interview question “where are you from (please specify the city/town you are from) said they are from Amman. Since generally the socio-economic status of those coming from Amman differs from those living in Madaba, some of the students who come to AUM from Madaba experience a culture shock. “For the Madaba community, anyone who is going to AUM, means they are rich, means nice cars, means they don’t know what’s going on in life” (Staff Member).

Thus, although having an American university at that location is unusual, the university is both intentionally as well as naturally impacting the city of Madaba. The university’s intentional plans for the city of Madaba include integrating the local community and externally adapting the university (Schein, 2017). For instance, solving local, national and regional problems is among the strategic plan goals of the university. “We are currently trying to pay attention to the local community. Starting with Madaba and expanding into Jordan in general. I am doing my best to serve, to integrate this university and its employees in the local community and the region”

(Dean 1). When Senior Administrator 1 started at AUM, they “endeavored to reach out to the local Muslim community. We gave them scholarships and involved them in the university”. Dean 2 said “The university is trying to cater to the transformation that is taking place in the region, in the globe and in the area by creating a study plan that is relevant and also constructive”. As for the university’s natural impact on Madaba, it is mainly economic. “The local community is sensing the difference, because the purchasing power of the students who attend AUM helps the local small businesses a lot” (Staff Member). The Staff Member shared examples of a new food small businesses that have opened up in Madaba since the inauguration of the university.

AUM’s Not-for-profit Identity

While on site, another university in the country came up a few times in conversation with members of the AUM community: Princess Sumaya University for Technology (PSUT) in Amman. An impression was created that some people in Jordan may disagree that AUM is the only private not-for-profit university in the country due to the existence of PSUT. This perception is confirmed as the official website of PSUT claims itself to be “the only private and non-profit university in Jordan” (PSUT, n.d.). Considering the age of AUM and the lack of publication date on PSUT’s website, it is possible that this was written before AUM’s establishment. However, PSUT, while labeled “non-governmental” appears to have governmental ties in terms of ownership, as it is owned by the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) of Amman, Jordan, which is “born out of the great hearts and spirit of His Majesty the Late King Hussein and HRH Prince Hassan in 1970” (Royal Scientific Society, n.d.). This jeopardizes its “private” identity. Senior Administrator 1 explained that “it’s camouflaged as independent [...]

they get a lot of support from the government, so indirectly they will get money but not directly.” Therefore, AUM still maintains its sole private, not-for-profit identity in the country. “It is the only university that has no stockholder in Jordan” (Senior Administrator 2).

Its private, not-for-profit identity is challenging for the institution, as the Jordanian law does not differentiate between private for profit and private not-for-profit institutions. “The only difference is between private and public. All private universities are under one umbrella” (Senior Administrator 2). This generalization lumps AUM with other private universities in the country all of which (with the exception of PSUT) are for profit. This could cause small but impactful legal issues in terms of fundraising and other university activities. When asked about what their non-profit identity means to them, Senior Administrator 1 and 2 agreed that through this identity, the university focuses more on quality and excellence of education rather than making money.

Dean 1 additionally pointed out AUM’s not-for-profit identity to point out a potential issue regarding sustainability. “What matters is not just to operate right now, rather to ensure that we can grow in the future and be sustainable”. Dean 1 believes that AUM’s Catholic identity, which he connected to its not-for-profit identity, could be a threat to organizational sustainability. “We have to be able to sustain our existence as a Catholic institution in the Middle East”. Dean 1 points out that creating their own profits is important in the process of assuring sustainability, because while the Vatican and the Patriarchate founded the institution and supported it in the beginning, the support has decreased since its foundation. Another way to tackle the sustainability issue is through “prov[ing] ourselves as a Catholic founded university, that we are an inseparable part of Jordan and the region [...] because the issue of differences in religion sometimes is rejected. Sometimes religiously affiliated institutions are not easily accepted by the

general public in the region” (Dean 1). Senior Administrator 2 said “as a new not-for-profit, American university, sometimes we feel like we are walking against the current/stream” (translated).

Conclusion: AUM’s Organizational Identity

AUM’s organizational identity is multilayered; it consists of American, Religious, Jordanian and not-for-profit identities. Its American identity is the most influential in terms of marketing due to conceptions, related to context-relativity that preconceive that American institutions are of high quality and can be more expensive. In order to make its American identity more legitimate in the region, AUM is seeking American accreditation with NECHE, which is a lengthy and arduous process, that, thus far, seems to be going well. AUM’s Religious and Jordanian identities are mostly in contradiction due to differences in values between AUM and the general culture of Jordan, which have created the crisis of acceptance. AUM’s Jordanian identity also seems to cause some challenges to its American identity in relation to institutional culture and norms. For example, the collective nature of the culture of individuals working at the institution can sometimes create a large power distance. Lastly, AUM’s not-for-profit identity is also challenged by its Jordanian identity due to a non-differentiating approach that Jordan takes to private universities, which are generally for profit in the country.

AUM’s Organizational Design

As mentioned, the design of an organization is the process of developing and implementing institutional strategy, which refers to the establishment of organizational goals and the means by

which they are achieved. It reflects structures of accountability and responsibility related to people, rewards and processes (Elsbach & Stigliani, 2018; Buchanan & Huczynski, 2019). In higher education, these structures are usually reflected in three areas of organizational design; pedagogical practices; teacher-students interaction; and faculty-faculty (and staff) interactions (Tierney, 2008). Members of senior management/leadership are often key elements that highly influence the design of their organization (Simard, Aubry & Laberge, 2018).

Based on this definition, in analyzing AUM's organizational design, it is helpful to focus on the organization's clearly stated strategic plan. This section, therefore, lays out AUM's strategic plan, the components of which demonstrate its organizational goals. It then presents the available structures of accountability and responsibility at AUM through analyzing the components of the strategic plan and identifying the means by which the goals of the organization are being (or planning to be) achieved.

AUM's strategic plan

The University's strategic plan "discusses areas of improvement and attempts to chart key strategic directions in areas that can produce the best long-term results for AUM" (American University of Madaba, n.d.). Early in the development of the organization, a "Strategy Committee" was formed at AUM to develop a draft of the strategy outline. The committee still exists and it consists of a member of the Board of Trustees, a faculty member, and an external consultant. Four general topics in the strategic plan encompass the strategic goals. The topics are character, structure, finances, and direction.

Character as a “general topic” in the strategic plan includes:

- As a priority, achieving accreditation by an American accrediting agency
- Developing leadership through Catholic values, Jordanian culture and American-style problem solving, critical thinking, and creativity
- Strengthening the international perspective of AUM and placing greater emphasis on globalization, which necessarily covers staff, students, curriculum, research and support services
- Developing a distinctive spirit within AUM through shared activities and events in the arts, athletics
- AUM’s contribution to solving local, national and regional problems

Structure as a “general topic” in the strategic plan includes:

- Ensuring that AUM’s management and governance continue to be transparent and effective in its use of resources to meet the needs of its students, staff and stakeholders
- Improving the performance of all university personnel to create a dynamic environment
- Revising and reprioritizing the existing Master Plan in view of the available resources, the new projection of student population and the introduction of new programs

Finances as a “general topic” in the strategic plan includes:

- “The university will support the owner to expand and diversify fund-raising and grant solicitation sources; local and international”
- Establishing operational and capital reserves to provide contingency funds and smooth cash flow

Direction as “general topic” in the strategic plan includes:

- Strengthening student leadership capabilities and providing better pathways to employment by increasing and improving courses offered by AUM
- Focusing research and learning in areas that have direct benefit to Jordan and the Middle East Region

AUM’s American Identity in its Design

The strategic plan suggests incorporating some level of recognition to Jordanian and Catholic values in the organization’s design in addition to its American identity. “As a university we’re trying to follow every policy when it comes to the American system, but at the same time we are trying to adapt or at least have a compatible reasoning of what’s going on between following the American system and the reality of Jordan and the social economic elements that are involved” (Staff Member). However, there still seems to be a fixated focus on its American identity as dictating the organization’s design. The strategic plan, for instance, specifically the general topic of character strongly emphasizes this fixation. Making a distinct “spirit” at AUM through student activities, focusing on critical thinking, problem solving and creativity, and increasing the focus on “globalization” are all unfamiliar aspects to Middle Eastern higher education and align more with the American tradition. Senior Administrator 1 said, “We are seeking American style education in everyone. Because it is well-known about independence, about graduating students who are critical thinkers and problem solvers, who are well-rounded and balanced education, liberal arts and specialties. At the same time, they are independent, they engage in dialogue and they advocate tolerance of the others”.

Hence, pedagogical practices -as one of the areas of organizational design in higher education (Tierney, 2008)- are “going more toward the Western system” at AUM (Dean 4). AUM is trying to take a holistic approach in its educational style, one which is usually found in US colleges and universities. “Our main focus is keeping the students happy by educating them as people and developing the university as a whole” (Staff Member).

In explaining this emphasis on American design in pedagogy and beyond, it is noted that most faculty members at AUM believe that American-style teaching and learning is an “attractive” feature to the majority of students. Indeed, in an open-ended survey question directed to the student population at AUM, 18 out of 140 respondents said that AUM’s American identity was their most prominent reason for choosing to enroll at AUM. When asked how important AUM’s American identity is to them, a total of 122/171 participants chose either “extremely important” or “very important” (see figure 6). Additionally, there seems to be a correlation between AUM’s American identity and the teaching and learning methods. To an open-ended survey question about what they feel makes AUM “American”, 19 out of 89 respondents said it was its educational style, 14 said it was English language as the mode of instruction, and 15 respondents said that what makes AUM “American” are the teaching methods that professors use.

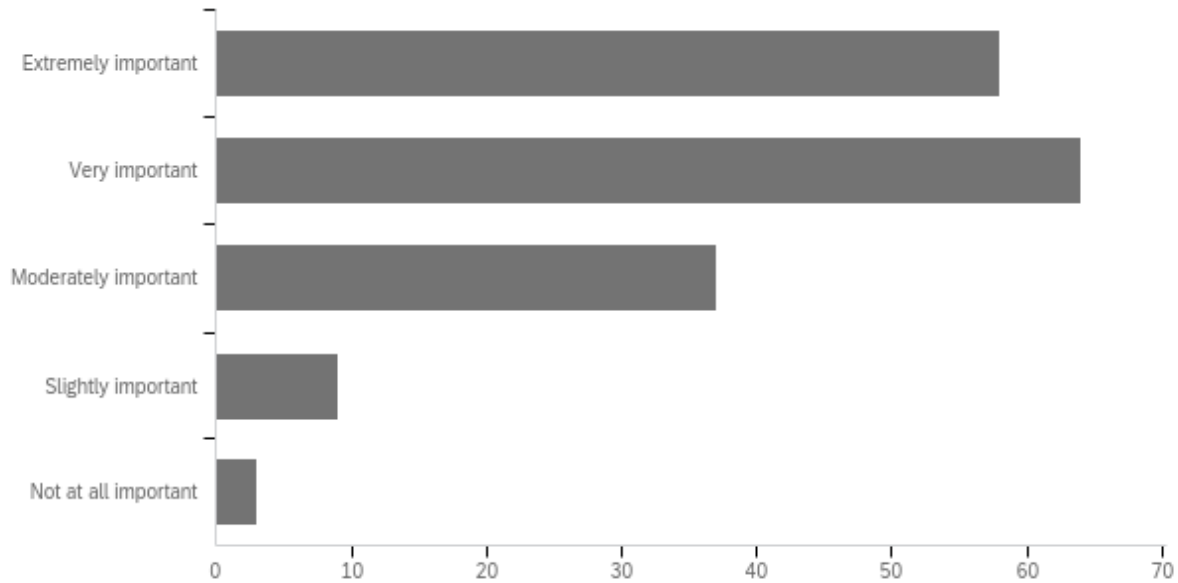


Figure 6. Survey response illustration to the question “How important is the American identity of AUM to you?”.

American higher education institutions in the Middle East bear the stereotype of not providing a genuine American-style education, rather an Arabic style with an American name. A study (Smail & Silvera, 2018) showed that more than 95% of students in American higher education institutions in Arab countries believe that the standards applied in American universities in Arab countries are not similar to those applied in the States.

Most interviewees (administrators, faculty and staff members) expressed the belief that AUM is not completely American in its design due to regional or national cultural aspects that impact the organization operationally (e.g. collectivism). Most of the interviewees who expressed this conviction further believed that the impact of regional/national traditions on the organization were usually negative. Whereas, in their survey responses, 54.78% of student participants indicated that they believe that AUM, as an American institution, is positively affected by the general culture of Jordan. Additionally, 12.10% indicated that they believe AUM is not affected

by Jordanian culture, 26.11% said they were unsure, and only around 7% believed that AUM is negatively affected. (see table 10).

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Positively	54.78%	86
2	Negatively	7.01%	11
3	Not affected	12.10%	19
4	Not sure	26.11%	41
	Total	100%	157

Table 10. A projection of survey responses to the question “How do you think AUM, as an American institution, is affected by the general culture of Jordan?”.

Those who said “Positively” or “Negatively” were directed to answer a follow-up open-ended question, in which they were asked to share specific ways in which they believe AUM is affected by Jordanian culture (whether that is positively or negatively). From those who answered positively (86 participants), 56 answered the follow-up question. However, only 26 of those had comprehensive answers, which were among the themes of generosity, ethics, diverse perspectives, customs and traditions. The remaining included answers such as “it doesn’t”, “I don’t know”, “nothing” or other incomprehensive answers that do not address the question, such as “I highly respect all cultures .. and Jordanian culture is similar to my own” or “Even though it's supposed to be an American university the professor still speak in Arabic sometimes”, which reflects a more negative impact but the participant had chosen “positively” as an answer. On the other hand, of those who answered “Negatively” (11 participants), all opted to answer the follow-up open ended question, of which 5 had incomprehensive answers such as “no idea”. The rest thought that the Jordanian lifestyle and people’s views negatively affected the culture of

AUM as an American institution. For example, one participant wrote: “the way the doctors and professors think or handle problems, it's completely based on the negative Jordanian thinking”.

When it comes to differences in pedagogical practices between AUM and other universities in the country, it seems that AUM indeed has a different approach. This educational style is led and maintained through evaluation methods that involve learning outcomes. For example, “the question on the exam should be derived from the learning outcomes. It is very important to have the skills for these learning outcomes, like math or soft skills.” (Senior Administrator 2). Due to its pedagogy and American model, Dean 2 believes that compared to other universities in Jordan, AUM is “a more caring environment”. They added that “it takes into account that we are here to empower students rather than punish or correct behavior. This is something that I could not enjoy at other universities because they were about the imposition of bylaws and regulations, but here, the approach is different”. For example, due to the wide range of knowledge and fluency in English among AUM’s students who come from diverse educational backgrounds, a few faculty members have created study groups where professors work with students to explain lessons and improve their language skills. Sometimes, students are paired on the basis of strengths and weaknesses and are encouraged to help each other by working on their areas of weakness and sharing their strengths. AUM encourages its faculty to approach educating students in an experimental way (what they call active learning). “We do not rely heavily on standardized exams because we want to empower how the students want to learn. I think this is the only university in Jordan that has a project at the end of the academic year and not a standardized exam” (Dean 2). Some students also notice the concrete differences in AUM’s approach to teaching and learning. To an open-ended survey question, four student respondents said that AUM’s uniqueness in the Jordanian context was their primary reason for enrolling at AUM.

Related to pedagogical practices is another area identified by Tierney (2008): teacher-student interactions, which impact the design of any given higher education institution. Two of the three faculty members I interviewed mentioned their relationships with students. Faculty Member 1 and 2 both have educational background in the US and both reflected on their experiences as students in the US and their relationships with their professors. The reality in the Middle Eastern region in general reflects a “traditional teaching and learning style” where the teachers are superior and the relationship is quite formal. Faculty Member 1 shared: “I don’t like the traditional style. I am open, I even ask my students for feedback and I listen to them. You have to be close to the students to know what they need and because some of them, they take you as a mentor”. Indeed, while on site, a casual relationship between both Faculty Member 1 and 2 and their students (compared to the general phenomenon in the region) was observed separately and on different occasions.

However, while none of the faculty members I interviewed explicitly rejected the idea of a more casual relationship with the students, both Faculty Members 1 and 2 shared that not all faculty members at AUM are open to it. “I try to propagate this idea [of having a more open relationship with the students at AUM with other faculty members], but they don’t want” (Faculty Member 1). Additionally, while Faculty Member 2 demonstrated support for casualty by saying that “any student can walk in here and tell me anything. I know many of the personal stories of students cause it's a small school”, they pointed out limitations. “For example, in the US we called our professors by their first name. Here, I would do it, but unfortunately, the culture in Jordan does not allow it because if you give too much, there would not be a red line anymore”. When asked

about their “favorite thing about AUM” in an open-ended survey question, three students out of a total of 134 respondents answered with teacher-student interactions.

AUM’s Organizational Structure: interactions among faculty and between faculty and administrators

Compared to higher education institutions in the US, AUM differs in its structure due partly to a dearth of human resources and partly to a rigidity of hierarchy (which is not generally considered an American trait in organizations). For example, all the deans at AUM are also faculty members who teach courses, and staff members, while a bit more isolated, are also highly involved in different types of overall processes that concern the organization as a whole. Therefore, all members of the organization (excluding students) have relatively loosely defined roles and might find themselves in transitory roles or floating between different tasks.

Faculty Member 1 and Dean 3, both of whom have experiences working in the US and other countries, shared that the overall design of AUM is complicated and restrictive at times. For example, the Deans’ Council is required to have six meetings per semester, which is where deans from all departments come together to discuss important issues. “We meet with the president sometimes and we find ourselves forced to discuss absurd issues such as whether or not we should waive a \$70 fee that is requested by a student”. Dean 3 went on to express frustration in the process and suggested that more autonomy should be given to the employee who would be making the fee waivers after perhaps training them on making such decisions. This would cut meeting time, which they explained is mostly spent on such irrelevant issues. “But maybe if we want to change the fee from \$70 to \$50 for all students, then yeah, this can be discussed in

meetings”. Additionally, related to the loosely defined roles and dearth of human resources at AUM, Dean 3 also shared that “in the US, you do your work and no one bothers you. Here, you get bothered a lot. Faculty Members [including Deans] get more tasks and responsibilities than a faculty member would expect in the US” (Dean 3). Faculty Member 1 also referred to the complexity of the system and explained that “there are a lot of restrictions on faculty”. When asked about the biggest gap in the system that might lead to this complexity and restrictiveness, Faculty Member 1 said “communication between faculty and the higher ups. There is a gap and misinformation. You don’t have the freedom to talk”. Faculty Member 1 also referred to the gaps in the university’s design at the time of its foundation. “They did not allow people with expertise to work on founding the right curricula and systems. They copied and pasted the programs without realizing that it has to be a unique university and it has to offer American style learning and education”. Later on requests were sent to the administration in regard to changing details of the curricula that are restricting the delivery of proper American style education, but “it all went to deaf ears. You just write reports for nothing”.

Many of the interviewees mentioned report writing as a time intensive task. Senior administrator 1 also mentioned supervising the delivery of the reports and making sure that the minutes of meetings between staff, faculty and deans are being delivered. Such practice suggests a high dependency on procedural details that appear to be unnecessary sometimes. The Staff Member, for example, listed report writing as one of the tasks that takes most of their working time. Therefore, there could be a possible disconnect between the stated design and the actual functioning of the organization, which is to achieve a more US-style design. However, due to the subjective culture of individuals involved in the organization as well as administrators,

sometimes tasks can be done in the typical Jordanian way, which impact the American identity of the organization when it comes to its design.

As an American identifying institution, AUM surprisingly has nothing close to tenure track.

“That is a problem. It’s a private university and it depends on the board of trustees and how they see it. We struggle through that too. All faculty members are contracted. One president who came and tried to initiate a tenure process didn’t last long and they fired him” (Faculty Member 1). In parallel, AUM’s institutional strategic plan has a relatively lower emphasis on faculty research compared to other American institutions. Therefore, interviewed faculty members (including deans who also act as faculty members) seemed to have a lower research focus, as that does not seem to be an institutional priority based on the strategic plan. When asked about challenges in conducting research, faculty members pointed to lack of time (which connects back to the lack of human resources and rigidity of hierarchy mentioned in the beginning of this section), in addition to funding and incentive. Faculty members explained that internal/institutional funding is limited and governmental research funds, if available, require a lengthy process and are practically not merit based. “It depends on who you know in the ministry of higher education and if you know someone, they can pave the road for you” (Faculty Member 1). In general, then, research output at AUM is not specifically encouraged.

Regional and National Impact on Operations at AUM

Scholarships and the Admission Process

AUM provides merit-based scholarships or tuition reductions which are solely based on students' high school transcripts. For example, if a student has a grade point average in their high school diploma between 94% and 97.9% they receive a partial scholarship of 80% to their tuition fees, if a student has a grade between 90% and 93.9%, they receive a partial scholarship of 70% and so on.

US universities are known for their holistic admissions process, in which the applicant is considered based on a number of application materials, the most important one of which is generally a personal statement. This statement gives personal and extracurricular insights to the admissions team, which is taken into consideration in the admission decision. Unlike AUM's admission process, in the US an admissions cut-off point based on high school grades is a rare phenomenon. AUM has "a minimum accepted grade average" for each program. For example, the lowest accepted grade average is 60% and that is the cut-off point for six programs including English Language and Literature, Translation, Biology and Biochemistry, and Interior Design. The highest accepted grade average is 80%, which is the cut-off point for four programs; Architecture, Pharmacy, and both programs in the Engineering department (Civil Engineering and Mechanical Engineering). The one other cut-off points fall in the middle and is 70%, which is the cut-off point for two programs; Medical Laboratories and Nutrition and Dietetics. This sort of practice is more in line with how admissions are handled elsewhere in Jordan.

The interviewed Staff Member explained the mentality behind this phenomenon: “We don’t have this kind of mentality that you should have a recommendation letter or a cover/motivation letter. We sometimes have it when you go for masters but never for bachelors. This is because as soon as you graduate from high school, you are expected to go to university. There is no motivation to go to a specific university. Most of the students in Jordan go to a specific university just because they have to or because their grades allow them to. Parents consider you a loser if you don’t go to university. We don’t have the mentality to do something different ... that’s why people who are coming here don’t have a specific motivation. It’s very clear that people are coming here to do one single thing: get a job. If AUM requires a motivation letter, students will be like ‘why would I write a letter? I will just go to another university’”.

So, at least some members of the administration assume that students don’t have any specific motivation for attending AUM. While this assumption is culturally grounded -as that is the norm in the region as a whole- survey data from the student population suggests that in the case of AUM, students might be willing to provide different admission materials. For instance, as previously presented in figure 6, 122/171 student participants indicated that the American identity of AUM is either “extremely important” or “very important” to them. Therefore, as the only American university in the country, students seem to value this unique and exclusively available identity and might therefore be willing to provide specific materials to attend.

Additionally, as presented in figure 5, despite its inconvenient location, students are still willing to commute to attend AUM, and lastly, to the survey question “Overall, are you happy with your decision to enroll at AUM?”, around 77% of participants indicated that they were (see figure 7).

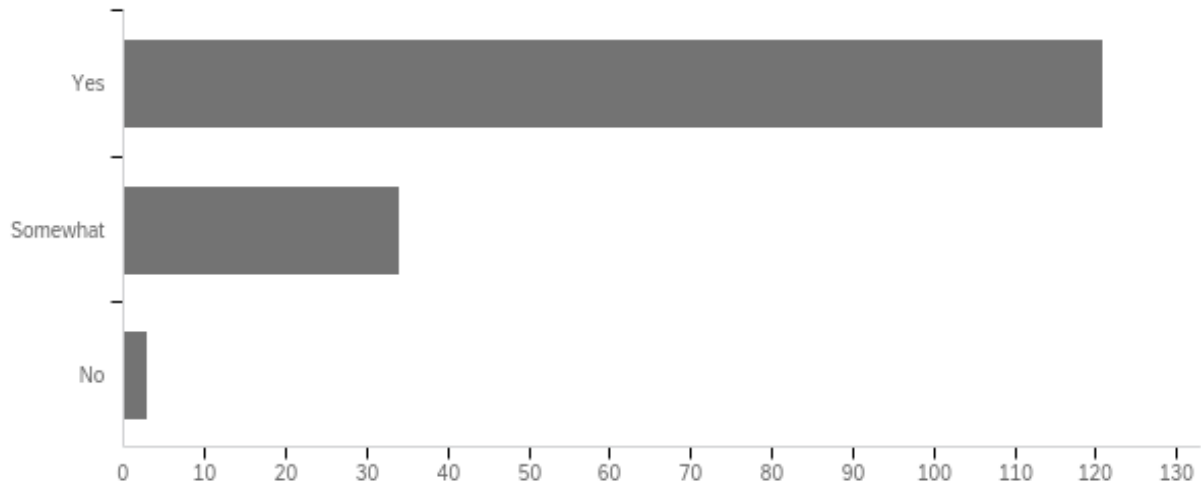


Figure 7. A presentation of survey responses to the question “overall, are you happy with your decision to enroll at AUM?”.

Higher Education as a Means to an End or an End Itself?

On a surface level, higher education is a means to an end in many societies around the world.

However, the way different societies think about higher education and the level to which they

consider it as merely a means to an end or closer to an end itself differs: “the idea that you value education itself is very different than the Arab standard, which is, it has to be practical. You just

don’t get a degree in something you can’t apply. It seems like a waste to Arabs” (Faculty

Member 3). Indeed, in the past five years there has been a rapid movement toward vocational

education in Jordan (Janjua and Gaulee, 2019) “because the market has been saturated with

students having the same degrees. Additionally, we are a very fashionable kind of community,

new trends take over in a very short period of time. They currently favor vocational schools

because it is more practical and you can apply it” (Dean 1). Throughout all interviews, the sense

of focus on the job market has been consistent. In its marketing, for instance, AUM utilizes the

idea that most of its graduates are immediately getting jobs and the fact that being an AUM

graduate is seen positively among employers in the country (Staff Member). Additionally, at

least two survey respondents had answers to the open-ended question about the primary reason for enrolling at AUM that were along the lines of increasing their job prospects upon graduation. Moreover, an Arabic document addressing the degree of total quality management application in Jordanian universities (Association of Arab Universities, 2008) frequently mentions the job market in a way that implies higher education as a means to “satisfy the desires/needs” of the job market.

The Economy and Lowering Standards

The overall economy of Jordan has deteriorated in recent years. Throughout the interviews this new reality statement came up many times as a factor impacting different organizational operations. Three interviewees explicitly mentioned that they believe one of the ways the national economy of Jordan is impacting AUM is through its student population. Faculty Member 3 shared that the kinds of students that would be good for AUM (i.e. “English speakers, those with international backgrounds...”) are leaving the country and they tend to stay away due to the deteriorating economy. “So, we are left with [students who graduate from] national schools [verses better private schools in Jordan], or the oddball kind of student whose parents don’t want them to leave the country, or maybe they went and didn’t like it and they came back. But we don’t have many from top private high schools -I’ve come across very few”. Thus, AUM is seen by some faculty members to be lowering its standards for the sake of sustainability and survival.

While mentioned by some interviewees, the details of this trend are outside the scope of this study, which did not investigate the severity of progressively lowering standards. However, three different initiatives can be identified in bringing what could be seen as “less qualified students” to

AUM; a program assisting Syrian refugees; a program assisting those from Madaba; and a program assisting students from other peripheral areas of Jordan. This is, of course, a generalization, as indeed many Syrian, locals and other students who do not share a common background with the normal AUM student are just as well qualified.

Conclusion: AUM's Organizational Design

While acknowledging that AUM has unique aspects as a university in the region, 12 out of 13 interview participants circled back to saying that the general regional and national culture impacts its Americanness. For example, Dean 4 said “If you look at the whole picture, from the first time you will consider this a huge difference. But once you go in, at the context of AUM let’s say, you’ll see that people at AUM are the same values as other Jordanian. You are working under a main culture, the Jordanian culture”. Most interview participants recognize a gap between an institution based in the US and AUM, especially those participants with international or American experience. While this acknowledgement is clear among members of the organization, deliberate adaptation to the design of the organization to its multi-layered identity is lacking. Instead, there is a clear fixation on a desired American design for the organization. This focus comes from the high value that students assign to the American identity of AUM, which appears to be highly correlated with its teaching and learning. Compared to other universities in the country, AUM approaches pedagogy a bit differently. Therefore, students indicated that they value a feature of AUM with real life implications.

However, when it comes to interactions between faculty, staff and administrators, AUM’s organizational structure seems to be highly impacted by the national culture. Due to attributes generally associated with Jordanian culture (e.g. collectivism, power distance, utilizing

connections), practices like heavy report-writing and the making of exceptions in hiring and promotion processes create a disconnect between the stated design and the actual functioning of the organization.

Despite its complex and multi-layered identities, when it comes to operations, the university seems to be mostly impacted by its national and regional culture. This impact is clearly manifested through some operational processes and cultural assumptions that trickle down to impact the design of the organization, such as the processes regarding financial aid and admissions.

Findings and Discussion

AUM's American Identity & Context-Relativity

As its most marketed identity piece, AUM's American identity and the pre-conceptions that are associated with it are highly connected to context-relativity. When asked what they feel is "American" about AUM as an open-ended question, 13/89 student participants indicated that its American identity relates to its high quality. Moreover, in order to further stress the potency of this identity AUM is seeking American accreditation. Senior Administrator 2 said, "The focus of American accreditation, which is the best tool for achieving quality and maintaining this quality. It represents the best and most attractive tool for students in the area". What is the direction of the relationship between American identity and quality in the regional and national context of AUM? Since good quality does not automatically mean that an institution is American unless that identity piece is communicated, it is evident that the relationship goes the other way. "If you go to an American university it means you are really good at what you do" (Staff Member). The conception, therefore, in the national context of Jordan, similar to other Arab countries, is: American = good quality (but good quality does not necessarily equal American).

This association is connected to the colonial aspect of context-relativity. It is related to the fact that the relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination and of varying degrees of a complex hegemony through which the definition of the Orient is one that is set by the Occident. The two frameworks through which the colonial aspect of context-relativity is explained on pages 16-18 of this study are connected, and together they suggest dangers and temptations for formerly colonized people to employ these structures upon themselves or upon others (Said, 1978). And upon themselves they did. Seeking and investing in

the arduous and costly US accreditation process is increasingly becoming the norm among higher education institutions in the Middle East that want to proclaim prestige and good quality (Altbach 2003; Altbach & Knight, 2007; Van Damme, 2000; Grant, 2013).

In the early 2000s, when the phenomenon of “selling” American accreditation or certification to universities in foreign countries was first noticed as a trend, American accreditation organizations were rebuked for doing so. While it had a large impact on many aspects of higher education, such as global standardization of curricula, which has beneficial but also potentially dangerous aspects, some scholars saw the phenomenon of importing models of higher education accreditation as a potential source of cultural ‘imperialism’ (Altbach, 2003; Altbach & Knight, 2007; Van Damme, 2000). Altbach (2003) believes that the US, as an academic superpower, has a duty not to abuse its academic muscle around the world because it would be evading other countries and using a form of soft power, which could be seen as a form of colonialism. Moreover, this raises concern as “[i]t is far from certain that a model that suits one country or region also is optimally suited for accommodating an academic environment in another country” (Van Damme, 2000, p. 20). Altbach (2003) similarly shares this concern and addresses it by saying that “American accreditation is designed for the realities of American higher education. It reflected the history, norms, and values of the U.S. academic system” (p. 6) and as the concept of context-relativity shows, applicability across cultures has proved to be unviable in many instances.

When presented this idea of imperialism in connection to American accreditation in higher education, Faculty Member 3 told a story about the discussion of honor crimes in Jordan and how it was brought to public attention. An honor crime is referred to the act of murdering a

family member due to the belief that the victim has brought shame or dishonor upon the family by disobeying principles of a society or religion. In the 1980s and 1990s King Hussein and her Majesty Queen Noor chose Jordan times as a platform to address this societal issue. Instead of bringing a foreigner in, they brought a very well-placed woman in society from a very prominent family in Jordan who became the lead reporter on this issue and eventually succeeded in illegalizing it. “If they had brought a foreigner to write articles and bring up this issue, it would have been dead in the water. They would have attacked it and said this is a foreign influence and they are just trying to change us and this is colonization and so on”. Faculty Member 3 pointed out that this campaign was not only accepted but also successful despite the fact that it fundamentally pertains foreign ideas. “Questioning the culture [...] is very foreign to us” (Faculty Member 3).

Despite this example pointing towards a cultural rejection of US accreditors getting involved with AUM, both interview and survey data suggest an overall support for the American accreditation process in which AUM is partaking with NECHE. The role of context-relativity in looking at the past and planning for the future is crucial in such matters. However, it must not be taken as an easy or simple task. Context-relativity in this case refers to historical realities and current and situational phenomena. The state of neo-imperialism and idealization of Western culture in the Middle East was reached through the historical aspect of context-relativity and is strongly manifested in higher education and its institutions. Situational factors include the lack of available reliable national accreditation systems in the Middle East (Alkhateeb, Arkle, McDonough & Latif, 2018), which might have pushed the idea of adopting foreign accreditation processes (from which American was chosen as ‘the best’). More importantly, the force of

cultural and economic impact that the US holds on the rest of the world is an inevitable and unavoidable current and situational factor that even “local” organizations are influenced by norms coming from more powerful contexts. Even the origin of many important organizations in the region is questionable. For instance, the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAHE) was established with World Bank support in 2007 (Alsharari, 2018).

In effort to address the potent issue of educational quality in the Middle East, many key actors call for a complete and utter reform of the higher education system in Arab countries (Association of Arab Universities, 2008; Arab Human Development Report, 2002). But what would a complete reform result in? And how would it impact the local identity of these institutions, such as the Jordanian identity of AUM? Alternatively, what does following the Western model in a non-Western country produce?

A Misalignment Between AUM’s Organizational Identity Pieces through its Organizational Values

Despite AUM’s efforts to treat education as an end by enforcing American values such as critical thinking (Faculty Member 3) and by fighting corruption at the institution through enforcing rules and regulations (Senior Administrator 1), the organization’s strategy, goals and operations are highly impacted by the national and regional culture. “American” is not the only identity piece that AUM holds; even with its pursuit of American accreditation and stronger focus on its American identity compared to its other identities in its organizational design, many interviewees realize that they would ideally be trying to modify the American system to suit its other identity pieces. Even the institution’s strategic plan reflects a recognition of modified cultural values that would form the overall organizational culture of AUM. However, the conflict and contradiction

between the values and norms of AUM's different identity pieces cause operational issues for the institution.

- The collective nature of the national and regional culture negatively impacts AUM's organizational design by creating a large power distance in the organization despite its efforts to be impervious to those particular national and regional values.
- The national and regional impact on AUM caused the crisis of acceptance as a reaction to its religious identity. The occurrence of the crisis of acceptance suggests an overall misalignment and a lack of understanding in what Catholic higher education is and what its institutions do around the world, as none of them aim to evangelize or preach Christianity to the local community.
- Lastly, AUM's not-for-profit identity is highly impacted by the national culture and the national policies. Catholic higher education institutions usually have to be not-for-profit. However, this process is highly contingent on national regulations and tax systems. Since Jordan does not differentiate between private not-for-profit and private for profit higher education institutions, AUM's non-profit identity becomes a challenge.

In order to further explain the findings, it is worth mentioning the different types of organizational values— espoused, attributed, shared and aspirational (Broune & Jenkins, 2013) – and how they relate to organizational design. AUM's **espoused values** (those advocated by senior management) are currently (and have been almost since its foundation) focused on American accreditation, and therefore, the values that are communicated to be 'good' for the organization are those adopted from American culture through the accreditation process itself or through general perception of what American values are. **Attributed values** (those that members

generally regard as representative of the organization) differ between what is attributed by faculty and staff on the one hand, and students on the other hand. For instance, interviewed faculty and staff did not believe that AUM truly applies American values to its operations, whereas most students seemed to believe that AUM is truly American in its educational style and operations –31% of respondents said that its operations definitely are American and around 41% said that they probably are. AUM's **shared values** (the aggregation of the values of its members) present a heavily Jordanian set, which translates into the design of the organization through individuals' approach to institutional operations. **Aspirational values** (what members think the organizational values ought to be) seemed to be mostly American. Most of the interviewees seemed to have a strong belief that when it comes to teaching, management and overall operations, American-style approaches would be better for the institution. As for students, the American operational style of the institution and its American educational system has proved to be a prominent reason for their enrollment at the institution. Therefore, their aspirational values align with those of the interviewees and reflect an entirely American system.

In order for AUM to have a healthy organizational culture by ultimate terms, all of its identity pieces as well as its organizational design must be aligned. When they are not, overlaps or gaps can be created in its organizational values creating a disruption in its overall culture. Based on Bourne and Jenkins' (2013) elaboration, which is based on a western model of an organization, AUM's case falls somewhere in between having an expectation gap (see figure 8) and a dislocation gap (see figure 9). In AUM's case, the split in perceptions between different populations in its attributed values complicates matters and shifts them away from the standard gaps elaborated by Bourne and Jenkins (2013). In addition, the impact of context-relativity on

AUM is not taken into consideration when studying other cases on the western model in the literature.

Bourne and Jenkins (2013) directly connect expectation gaps to time, in terms of the organization's history. "A gap may occur between forms of values embedded in past patterns and forms oriented toward an intended future. This occurs, typically, when an organization is pulled through a process of radical change leading to managerial attempts to replace 'old' values with new ones" (p. 507). While valid, the precise definition of this gap by the authors does not apply to AUM, although it is helpful in framing this discussion. Time in its historical sense is still relevant in AUM's expectation gap, however, it is not exclusive to the organization's history, rather, in relation to context-relativity. Due to context-relativity and its parallel perception that American = good quality, AUM's espoused values and its espoused organizational culture are somewhat unrealistic. AUM is never going to be fully American in the same way that a higher education institution in the US is, such as Boston College for instance. Alternatively, an approach of aiming high and getting as far as possible (meaning, 'we can aim to be as American as possible and the further we get, the better') is not valid in this case for two reasons: 1. Aiming to be completely "American" in operations is hardly logically defined as "a high aim" and 2. When it comes to organizational goals, and the "Americanness" of AUM in particular, it is not a scale. Rather, different goals are entirely separate and require distinct processes to be achieved. Therefore, despite the awareness of different organizational identities within AUM's organizational culture and the need for a modified culture, AUM seems to still have a collective expectation gap in terms of the level of their ability to mainly manifest their American identity.

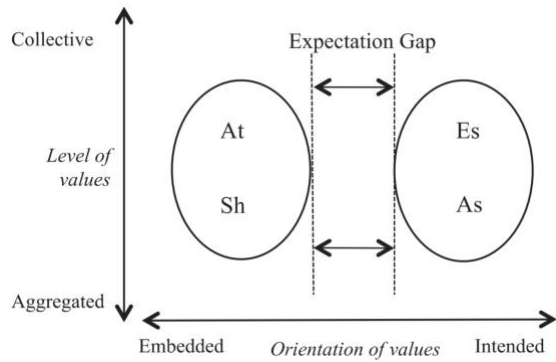


Figure 8. A graph showing an expectation gap between different organizational values (Bourne and Jenkins, 2013, p. 505).

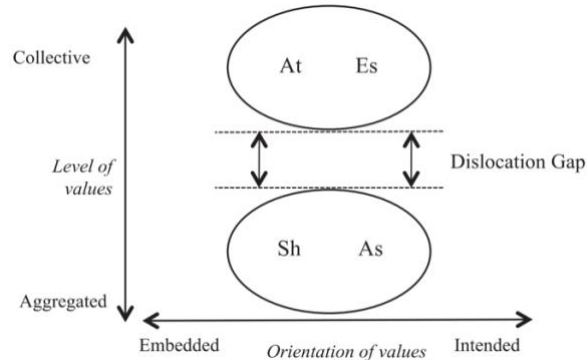


Figure 9. A graph showing a dislocation gap between different organizational values (Bourne and Jenkins, 2013, p. 505)

In the literature, a dislocation gap is framed to occur when espoused and attributed values differ from shared and aspirational (Bourne and Jenkins, 2013). In AUM’s case, this is not demonstrated by the present study’s findings. However, this gap is valid in that one way it may occur is when “organizations expand and cultural distances between functions and divisions emerge” (p. 508). This point is indeed valid in AUM’s case. While it is not a branch campus nor is it directly related or connected with another organization in the US, it is, in a way, connected, in its organizational culture, by trying to follow certain procedures, especially through the accreditation process. The strong regional and national impact on its American, Catholic and not-for-profit identity pieces, as well as its organizational design point to dislocation being a gap, although not in the exact same way described by Bourne and Jenkins due to context-relativity.

AUM’s Organizational Culture in Conjunction with Context-Relativity

Based on the finding that the general perception in the region is that “American education” indicates good quality, and the overall entrenched, negative association with local education (for example, most interviewees’ conviction that the impact of regional/national traditions reflect

negatively on the organization mentioned on p. 57 of this document), every “improvement” in the higher education system in the region is expected to attempt to make it similar to the American system. This perfectly explains why both AUM’s espoused and aspirational values are leaning more toward its American identity piece, which could create the illusion that there is consistency between what is communicated and what they aspire to achieve. However, there is ample inconsistency and contradiction due to its shared values being strongly Jordanian and most importantly, its attributed values being split up based on the population asked to define it. This split suggests a lack of clarity regarding the values, and therefore the identity of the institution, even to its current members.

Since the perception is that American = good quality, there are two possible tracks that a system reform in the region could take: a mimic (probably not identical due to context-relativity) of the American higher education system or alternatively an entirely different system based on the local and regional values that have been developed through a different series of conditionals than that of the Western Newtonian thought process (also due to context-relativity). The latter track, based entirely on Arab values (for instance, collectivism and large power distance as explained in the “National/Regional Influence on AUM’s Organizational Design” section of the study), is by all means difficult to achieve. Moreover, it could politically endanger the region (especially as an already inferior one) by removing it from the network of globalized nations that are all playing the same economic game on the same field. An alternative indigenous form of higher education system would not be as economical and its non-economic nature based on its values would additionally threaten its sustainability and furthermore its possibility to exist. Therefore, adaptation seems the best fit for the current “state of play”.

However, the region as a whole is left with extremely limited options to find a middle ground, and is in turn criticized for being inauthentic as neither fully American nor fully Jordanian. The point of this section is to show that context-relativity, as the inevitable historical, political, social, economic and political phenomenon that it is, has left the region with no other option. To further stress the power of context-relativity as a concept, consider whether “American” values are authentic to begin with. American higher education is but a clever modification of different processes such as Bologna, Napoleonic, and Humboldtian (Altbach, Gumport & Berdahl, 2011; Bennett, 2014; Lucas; 2016). However, due to context-relativity, specifically the power dynamics associated with it, American higher education is praised rather than criticized for being inauthentic.

In sum, by understanding and contemplating the concept of context-relativity, one must see that AUM’s organizational gaps and the misalignment between its different identity pieces and its organizational design is not a matter of unauthenticity. Being an American institution in the Middle East comes with a market advantage; therefore, such an approach is a way for AUM (and other such organizations in the region) to survive in a world where context-relativity is an unconscious reality. By being American “enough” to maintain its market advantage and being Jordanian “enough” to keep the peace with their students and staff and the surrounding community, AUM is finding a way to survive and advance its quality in the process. In other words, while there are some gaps between AUM’s desired organizational culture and its observed one (Schein, 2017), context-relativity alters the equation. Thus, this study arrives at a conclusion that because of context-relativity, AUM’s options are extremely limited. As a young

organization, AUM is doing its best to survive and is following procedures to learn from its own experience and operate differently if needed.

Conclusion

AUM's multilayered organizational identity consists of American, Religious, Jordanian and not-for-profit identity pieces. As its most marketed identity piece, AUM's American identity, and the pre-conceptions that are associated with it, are highly connected to context-relativity. A preconceived assumption in the Middle East is that American universities are always of high quality. AUM is nurturing its American identity by seeking American accreditation with NECHE. AUM's religious and Jordanian identities are mostly in contradiction due to differences in values between AUM and the general culture of Jordan, which have created the crisis of acceptance. AUM's Jordanian identity also seems to cause some challenges to its American identity in relation to institutional culture and norms. For example, the collective nature of the culture of individuals working at the institution creates a large power distance, which could create room for corruption. Lastly, AUM's not-for-profit identity is also challenged by its Jordanian identity due to a non-differentiating approach that Jordan takes to private universities, which are mostly for profit in the country.

While AUM's identities are unique in its national, as well as regional, context (as the only American and the only Catholic university in the country and one of few in the region), due to the Jordanian culture that individuals at the organization hold, operations take a Jordanian approach, therefore making AUM similar to other universities in the country in terms of

operations. Therefore, AUM's organizational design is highly impacted by its national and regional culture, except with regard to pedagogy. While not entirely American, pedagogy at AUM takes a different approach from most other universities in the country. For instance, it is the only university that does not require a standardized test at the end of the semester, but rather assigns a project. In the rest of its organizational design, such as interactions between faculty, staff and leadership, AUM states to have an American approach. In its strategic plan, AUM clearly states aspirational values that are aligned with the American model of a university in all aspects of its operations. However, this study shows that the current design of AUM does not entirely reflect American values or norms. Additionally, AUM's organizational design does not align with the multilayered identity of the organization due to the amplified focus on its American identity and partial neglect in incorporating other identity pieces into its organizational design as well. This misalignment, then, causes gaps in its organizational culture that can be explained by a modification of what Broune and Jenkins (2013) call an expectation gap and a dislocation gap.

However, these findings must be understood through the lens of context-relativity, a major concept in this study. Context-relativity has a three layered meaning in this study: the first relates to the idea that "Contexts are structures that assign values to a variety of contextually variable parameters" (Gauker, 2010, p. 572) and that the meaning of a term is dependent on its context; the second meaning refers to how the high context-dependency of terms has related to challenges between individuals, organizations and political regimes since the 1970s; the third and final layer of meaning relates to the potent colonial aspect of context-relativity. The colonial aspect of context-relativity is explained through two frameworks: the first relates to Said's (1978)

“Orientalism” and the power-dynamics associated with it; and the second relates to differences in actual epistemological experiences between the Westerners and the “Orient”.

In the Middle East, context-relativity, especially its colonial aspect, have led to the perception that American = good quality. This conception applies to higher education institutions, and there are two possible tracks that a system reform in the region might take (for which many scholars advocate). The two tracks are: either a mimic of the American higher education system or an entirely different system based on the local and regional values (that have been developed through a different series of conditionals than that of the Western Newtonian orientation). The latter track, based entirely on Arab values (for instance, collectivism and large power distance as explained in the “National/Regional Influence on AUM’s Organizational Design” section of the study), is by all means difficult to achieve. Moreover, it could politically endanger the region (especially as an already inferior one in terms of political and economic power) by removing it from the network of globalized nations that are all playing the same economic game on the same field. An alternative indigenous form of higher education system would not be as economical and its non-economic nature based on its values would additionally threaten its sustainability and furthermore its possibility to exist. Thus, the region as a whole is left with extremely limited options to find a middle ground. In turn, institutions like AUM can be criticized for being inauthentic as neither fully American nor fully Jordanian. However, context-relativity, as the inevitable historical, political, social, economic and political phenomenon that it is, has left the region with no other option.

Therefore, institutions such as AUM are left with few options to survive in a world framed by context-relativity. AUM has to manage its existence and sustainability by being American “enough” to maintain its market advantage and being Jordanian “enough” to keep the peace with their students and staff and the surrounding community. In that process, AUM is also finding a way to advance its quality.

This study thus sheds light on the current state of AUM’s organizational culture and explains the historical and epistemological events that impact its current circumstances. Due to the general hidden nature of ideas such as context-relativity (both in the Western as well as the Oriental contexts) it is important to bring them into light through thorough explanation. For that reason, this study recommends that AUM encourages reading and teaching of such terms among their students through their core curriculum and among other members of the community through programming. By understanding aspects of context-relativity, members of AUM’s community are able to correctly utilize all of their identity pieces and address their expectation and dislocation gap by aligning their identities with its organizational design without idealizing Western cultures for the mere reason of power dynamics as part of context-relativity.

In looking forward, the reason behind the reality of AUM’s organizational culture is also crucial. While the gaps in AUM’s organizational culture are, in a way, justified by context-relativity (in addition to considering the organization’s young age), it is still important for the organization to address them properly. In order for an organization to be successful long-term, it needs to have a healthy organizational culture (Gulua, 2018). AUM must include all of its members (students, staff, faculty...etc.) in different ways in the process of intentional framing of its organizational

culture and find ways to align all of its identity pieces with its organizational design without idealizing its American identity.

Higher education in the developing world has many cases such as AUM's. This study, while not generalizable, helps us understand the inevitable historical, economic, political and sociocultural realities that such institutions have to deal with, as well as their challenges and opportunities.

AUM has the opportunity to make an impact on the course and nature of higher education in Jordan by adding different approaches to it and by introducing the public to it. Furthermore, with a greater emphasis on its other identity pieces and a reflection of that in its organizational design, AUM is able to help its local community and further, the nation and the region as a whole.

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