



The Factors That Influence Emirati High Schools Student When They Choose a Higher Education Institution in Dubai

**العوامل المؤثرة في اختيار الطلبة الاماراتيين لمؤسسات التعليم العالي في مرحلة
الثانوية العامة**

by

HANAN HASSAN ABDULLAH ALFARDAN

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP AND POLICY

at

The British University in Dubai

Dr. Clifton Chadwich

December 2013

DECLARATION

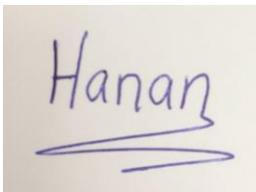
I warrant that the content of this research is the direct result of my own work and that any use made in it of published or unpublished copyright material falls within the limits permitted by international copyright conventions.

I understand that a copy of my research will be deposited in the University Library for permanent retention.

I hereby agree that the material mentioned above for which I am author and copyright holder may be copied and distributed by The British University in Dubai for the purposes of research, private study or education and that The British University in Dubai may recover from purchasers the costs incurred in such copying and distribution, where appropriate.

I understand that The British University in Dubai may make a digital copy available in the institutional repository.

I understand that I may apply to the University to retain the right to withhold or to restrict access to my thesis for a period which shall not normally exceed four calendar years from the congregation at which the degree is conferred, the length of the period to be specified in the application, together with the precise reasons for making that application.

A photograph of a handwritten signature in blue ink on a light-colored surface. The signature reads "Hanan" in a cursive script, with a horizontal line underneath it.

Signature of the student

COPYRIGHT AND INFORMATION TO USERS

The author whose copyright is declared on the title page of the work has granted to the British University in Dubai the right to lend his/her research work to users of its library and to make partial or single copies for educational and research use.

The author has also granted permission to the University to keep or make a digital copy for similar use and for the purpose of preservation of the work digitally.

Multiple copying of this work for scholarly purposes may be granted by either the author, the Registrar or the Dean of Education only.

Copying for financial gain shall only be allowed with the author's express permission.

Any use of this work in whole or in part shall respect the moral rights of the author to be acknowledged and to reflect in good faith and without detriment the meaning of the content, and the original authorship.

Abstract

This study investigates the factors that influence Emirati high school students when they select a higher education institution in Dubai. The sample of the study was Emirati grade 12 students from two private and two government schools in Dubai. A questionnaire was the instrument used to explore the factors that influence their college choice decisions and the information sources they depend upon when seeking information about universities and colleges. Factor analysis was the statistical technique used to analyze and simplify the data. Based on this analysis technique, the findings showed that there are two major factors that influence Emirati high school students' college choice: academic and personal factors. After a comparison of means, the variables that influence high school students' college choice were ranked by importance. The results are as follows: accreditation, student attainment, student educational aspirations, employment, availability of program majors, advice from others, cost and location.

نبذة

تبحث هذه الدراسة عن العوامل المؤثرة على الطلبة الاماراتيين في اختيار مؤسسات التعليم العالي في دبي. استهدفت الدراسة الطلاب الاماراتيين في الصف الثاني عشر في المدراس الحكومية (العدد 2) و الخاصة (العدد 2) في إمارة دبي لمعرفة العوامل الاساسية في قرار اتخاذ اختيار الجامعات أو الكليات المناسبة لهم. وتم استخدام الاستبيان كأداة بحثية في دراسة العوامل المؤثرة لاختيار الجامعة المناسبة من وجهة نظر الطلاب بالإضافة الى مصادر المعلومات التي تم الاعتماد عليها في عملية البحث. وتم التحليل البيانات عن طريق تحليل العوامل الشخصية والأكاديمية لدى الطلبة. وتم تحليل النتائج وأسباب الاختيار بناء على الترتيب من ناحية الأكثر أهمية. حيث أظهرت النتائج أن الطلبة الاماراتيين يهتمون أولاً بالإعتراف الأكاديمي للجامعة، وقدرة الاستيعابية للطلاب، وطموح الطالب، وسمعة الجامعة في سوق العمل وأثرها على التوظيف، وتوفر التخصصات المطلوبة في الجامعة، ونصائح من الأشخاص المحيطين بالطلاب، وتكلفة المالية للدراسة وأخيراً الموقع الجغرافي للجامعة.

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables.....	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction	8
Purpose of Study	10
Research Questions and Hypotheses.....	11
Significance of Study	11
Limitations	13
Chapter 2: Literature Review and Background	14
Student process in selecting higher education institutions.....	15
Developing student college choice models.....	18
Going deeper into student college choice.....	20
Developing policies to support students in college choice.....	20
Critiquing the effectiveness of student college choice policies:.....	21
Student college choice in Dubai.....	22
Contextual Background	23
Theoretical framework.....	29
Chapter 3: Methodology	35
Sample Selection	35
Instrumentation	37
The design of the instrument	38
Data Collection Process	39
Validity and Reliability	41
Data Analysis Procedures.....	35
Chapter 4: Results	42
Results of Data Analysis.....	42
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's Test.....	48
Factor Analysis.....	49
Factor rotation.....	44
Chapter 5: Discussion	51
Information sources.....	54
Emirati student college choice.....	56
Chapter 6: Conclusion	64
Research limitations.....	64
Implications for future research.....	64
Recommendations for higher education institutions.....	65
Recommendations for policy makers.....	65
References	67
Appendices	74
Appendix A	74

Tables:

Table1: number of schools and Emirati students' grade 12 in Dubai

Table2: Number of higher education institutions (HEI) and students in Dubai tertiary education (KHDA 2012).

Table3: Main Studies in the Literature Review

Table 4: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample= (N=181)

Table5: Emirati students field of programs potential interest in tertiary education:

Table6: Respondent profile by gender and type of school.

Table 7: Mean scores and standard deviations by item for the Emirati students for search stage:

Table 8: Mean scores and standard deviations by item for the Emirati students for the decision stage:

Table9: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Table10: Total variance explained in factor rotation.

Table 11: Factor loadings for exploratory factor analysis using a Varimax rotation and principal components extraction

Chapter 1: Introduction

The number of Emirati students enrolling in tertiary level education is continually increasing in the UAE. Looking back upon the history of the higher education sector in the UAE, the only higher education institution option available for Emiratis was the United Arab Emirates University, which had a limited offering of undergraduate programs. The UAE University was established in 1976, five years after the union of the UAE in 1971. At that time, Emirati high school students who had the intention to continue their higher education in the country had to travel to Al Ain to study at the UAE University. In the UAE University's first year, only 500 students were enrolled in separate campuses for males and females (Mograby 1999). No other local choice was available for Emiratis to study in their home Emirates until the mid-1980s when Higher Colleges of Technology were established. As a new nation, the UAE needed more educated people to serve their own country in order to grow diverse sectors. H.H Sheikh Zayed said that "Youth is the real wealth of the nation. The discovery of oil provides the necessary finances to improve the education system and develop academically and technically qualified citizens — men and women — able to serve their country in its future progress" (Naidoo 2011). In addition, Emiratis had to seek further options outside the UAE to continue their higher education study in Arab countries such as Egypt, Jordan and Syria, or in Western countries such as the US and UK. Now, after three decades, the number of Emirati students in various higher education institutions has increased remarkably to 120,000 in 2011. Education is a priority in the UAE government's agenda; it has been as concerned about educating its young people as moving to a knowledge economy. Therefore, the education of UAE nationals is key for the country's development.

Because education and development are strongly correlated, Dubai has been working to increase its capacity in all levels of education, including higher education. Today, Dubai alone has 52 higher education institutions, and there are more than 135 institutions all over the UAE (KHDA 2011). At the same time, the UAE has the highest

number of international branch universities in the world (Lane 2010). This number of diverse higher education providers in Dubai attracted more than 20,000 Emiratis to study at higher education institutions in the 2012 academic year (KHDA 2012).

Therefore, it is important to understand how Emirati students make the choice between one university and another. At school level, parents decide which school their children will go to. A KHDA (Knowledge and Human Development Authority) report shows that 57% of Emirati parents choose private schools for their children's education in Dubai (2011). However, when it comes to higher education, students decide which university to enroll with. It could be that the higher education institution choice is the first and most valuable decision that students make after high school. Some parents may be involved in students' college choice, while other students have other factors that influence their choice. Moreover, mature students may have different reasons to enroll in higher education compared to younger students.

However, when there are 52 universities in one small city like Dubai, more investigation is required to understand how Emirati students choose a higher education institution. In the literature, many factors influence student college choice. Those factors are student age, gender, high school performance and socio-economic background. At the same time, there are other institutional factors that influence student college choice, such as tuition fees, location, language of instruction, study flexibility and university reputation. Therefore, student college choice is a complex decision involving several factors from both students and higher education providers. Because student college choice is highly important, there is a need to understand how male and female Emirati students choose a higher education institution at undergraduate level. At the same time, it is important to understand the extent to which sources of information influence Emirati students' college choice. This study looks at the factors that influence Emirati students' choice for particular higher education institutions in Dubai and explores what information sources they depend upon when seeking more information about their selected higher education institution.

There is no doubt that there is a gap in transition between secondary school and higher education in Dubai, and in particular to UAE nationals. There are no policies or outreach

programs to support Emirati students in the move from high school to tertiary education. In addition, the lack of student guidance to tertiary education in the UAE has a huge impact on the development and growth of individuals and society on the whole (Mograby 1999). Humaid Al Qatami, Minister of Education, said in one education forum that "the major obstacle we are facing today in becoming a knowledge economy is the absence of student guidance" (Afshan 2011). Understanding how Emiratis choose a higher education institution is crucial to improve student support and guidance at tertiary level.

My initial interest in this issue came from my current job in the higher education department in the Knowledge and Human Development Authority. There is a continuous growth in enrolment in higher education institutions in Dubai year after year, especially among Emiratis. However, not all universities have experienced this growth. Some are very successful in increasing student numbers, while others struggle to maintain students. Moreover, there are more and more applications from branch and private universities to set up in Dubai, with very optimistic projections about student numbers. My experience has allowed me to recognize the necessity to understand how Emirati students choose higher education institutions and determine what the main factors are that influence students' choice of college.

1. 2. Purpose of the study:

The purpose of the study is to examine the factors that influence Emirati students in selecting a higher education institution and the information sources they rely upon. These factors are divided into student and institution characteristics. The researcher developed an instrument to measure the extent to which these factors influence student college choice. A questionnaire is used as an instrument to sample both male and female Emirati grade 12 students in the 2012-2013 academic year in selected private and public schools in Dubai.

1. 3. Research questions and hypotheses

This study examines the following research questions:

1. What are the most important information sources for Emirati students in the search stage?
2. What are the factors that influence Emirati students in their college choice?
 - What are the institutional characteristic factors that influence Emirati students' selection process in choosing a college?
 - What are the student characteristics factors that influence Emirati students' selection process in choosing a college?

1. 4. Significance of study

1.4.1. Government:

This study can be significant government policy makers. Education is one of the major priorities of the UAE government. According to a report published by the Office of Higher Education Policy and Planning in the UAE Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, one of the new objectives for the UAE higher education system in the next decade is to increase the accessibility of higher education for Emiratis:

Every Emirati secondary school graduate shall have higher education opportunities in UAE universities, colleges, workforce preparation or other programs and shall have the academic preparation needed to maximize these opportunities. (2007, P22)

Therefore, the last decade has seen growing numbers of higher education providers in UAE and in particular in Dubai. In parallel, there are also enormous growing numbers of Emirati students in higher education institutions (KHDA 2010). In terms of gender access to tertiary education, almost an equal number of female (45%) and male (55%) Emiratis attended higher education institutions in 2012 (KHDA 2012). The statistics show that female Emiratis choose to enroll in federal universities such as Zayed

University and Higher Colleges of Technology, while male Emiratis choose to enroll in local private universities such as Al Jazeera and the American University of the Emirates (CAA 2012).

The annual KHDA report on the higher education landscape in Dubai (2012) showed an increase in the number of Emiratis enrolling in private higher education institutions. In particular, there is a new trend of Emirati students moving toward private universities that are international branch universities in Dubai (Emarat EYyoum 2012). Therefore, it is worth understanding how Emirati students make their college choice when there is a diverse range of higher education institutions on offer.

At the same time, the Dubai government is also concerned about economic development. Dubai has been working toward economic diversity. In order to respond to economic demand, more UAE nationals need to be educated and trained to meet the demands of the workplace (Mograby 1999). The emirate is becoming a regional and international higher educational hub. Since 2003, there has been a huge increase in the number of higher education providers in Dubai and this is because of government initiatives establishing specialized free zones (Davidson & Smith 2008). Therefore, this study about student choice will help at national policy level in terms of which universities are attractive in Dubai's higher education market.

1.4.2. Higher education institutions:

In addition, this study will help at university level. In economic reality, students are customers as well. Higher education institutions need tuition fees from students to cover their costs. They need to attract many students in order to survive in the market. In most cases, cost is associated with high quality. At the same time, there were around 25 higher education institutions in 2003 and this number tremendously increased to 52 in 2010 (KHDA 2010), which means that competition is very high. All institutions want to be the first choice for anyone who seeks post-secondary education. Therefore, understanding the factors that influence Emirati student choice is a necessity to enhance the recruitment and marketing strategies by universities (Foskett & Hesketh 1997). Another factor of student college choice is its impact on student retention in

higher education institutions. There is numerous research in the literature that indicates that a lack of adequate preparation is a key factor in student drop-out and student academic failure in higher education (Kirst & Venezia 2004; Hagedorn & Tierney 2002).

1. 5. Limitations

One of the common anticipated problems in any study for quantitative and qualitative methods is access to the sample. There is no available database that includes students' contact details. Therefore, there is no possibility to have a survey sent by email or conduct phone interviews. The only option available is to visit the school and ask permission from school administration to reach to the high school students. The timing is also another anticipated problem that I may face because the high schools have very limited time for any extra activities due to the pressure of heavy course load, in particular the public schools. It will be challenging to get permission during exam time to meet students for interviews and surveys in exam and break days. Therefore, I need to send the survey within their availability, which is achieved by looking through schools' academic calendars.

Chapter 2: Literature review and background

The aim of this chapter is to explore the previous literature on student college choice. The studies mentioned in this chapter are international literature on college choice because there is no study about Emirati student college choice on national or international levels. The purpose of this study is to examine the factors that influence Emirati high school students in Dubai, and not to focus on the process that students go through. Following that, an explanation of the conceptual framework will be developed and used in this study based on relevant studies in the literature.

2.1 Literature review

'Going to college', 'college enrolment', 'access to college', 'college choice' and 'choosing college' are all terminologies used in the literature to understand factors that influence student college choice. There are quite a number of studies done about student choice of higher education institutions (Al-Fattal 2010; Foskett & Hesketh 1997; James, Baldwin & McInnis 1999; Chapman 1981; Tin, Ismail, Sulaiman & Othman 2001). The initial interest started in the 1970s when sociologists wanted to understand the complexity of decision making, and studied student decision making as an example (Bradshaw, George; Espinoza, Suzanne; Hausman, Charles 2001). In the 1980s and 1990s, there was an increase in the number of competitive higher education institutions, which led economists and higher education institutions to investigate more about student choice (Paulsen 1990).

College choice has short and long term critical impacts on individuals, society, the economy and the government. Therefore, a variety of people in different fields such as anthropology, government, business, and education have shown interest in this issue in the last three decades. For example, many economists studied the factors that influence student choice in order to use it for university marketing and recruitment strategies (Foskett & Hesketh 1997). These studies considered students as consumers and universities as profit generators. Therefore, they developed a higher education consumer model to understand consumer behavior in the context of education (Simoes & Soares 2010). Although the term "consumer behavior" is used by some researchers in the literature, the preference of the term "student choice" is more acceptable by many researchers (Foskett & Hesketh 1997). However, student choice studies are not only for

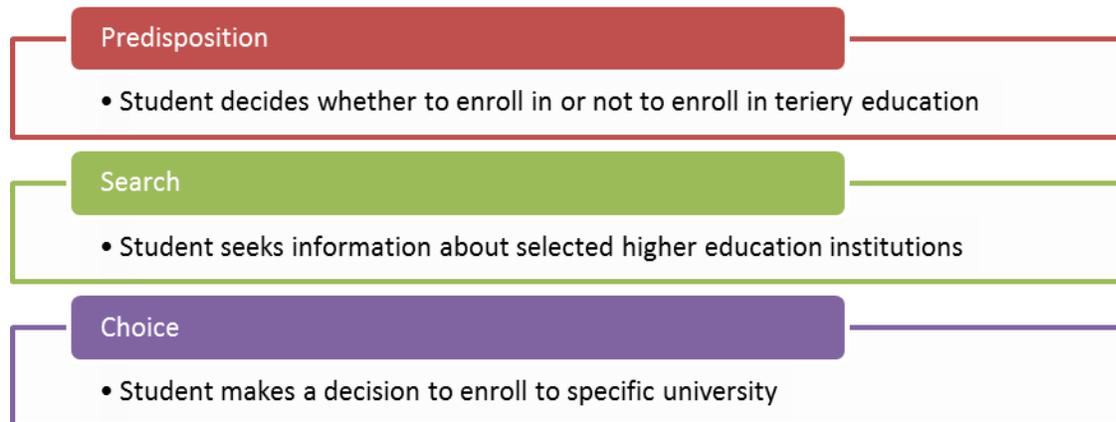
student marketing and recruitment strategies, but also important for countries that want to attract international higher education institutions. For example, many recent studies have been done about student choice in Malaysia and this is due to the Malaysian government's interest in making Malaysia a regional hub for higher education (Tin, Ismail, Sulaiman & Othman 2001).

2.1. First: Student process in selecting higher education institutions:

Early research about student choice was focused on the student decision making process (McDonough 1997). These studies examined the process that students go through to select a higher education institution as shown in the literature review. Prior to making their choice, students go through gradual steps starting a few years before or in high school about the intention to go to university or not. After the students' decision to go to a higher education institution, they move to the next stage to search for information about universities from school counselors, media, internet, university fairs, friends and family. Following information gathering, students create a list of potential universities. When students explore all the information gathered, they narrow the list to a few universities and then they make their final decision (Tatar & Oktay 2006).

Basically, students go through three stages: predisposition, search, and choice. It is worth mentioning that the process of making a higher education decision is complex according to some researchers. The complexity comes from the relationship between factors in each process making stage (Leach & Zepke 2005). Factors like parents' education, ethnicity, race, age, school attainment, size of higher education institutions, language of instruction, accreditation, friends, and counselors all have a different impact on students in the three different stages (McDonough 1997). Below is the description of

the three stages and factors in the literature:



2.1.1.1 Predisposition stage:

The first stage in student college choice is predisposition. In this stage, students decide whether they want to enroll in tertiary education or not. Different studies indicated that some students make their decisions as early as elementary school. Some studies suggested that this stage starts in grade 7 (Bergerson 2009). Few studies have examined what students do if they choose not to go to post-secondary education. There is a general assumption in the literature that students join the workforce (James 2000).

The factors that influence students in this stage are mainly related to student characteristics. One of the main factors is student academic achievement (Hagedorn & Tierney 2002). The studies showed that if a student performs well academically, there are more chances for him to go on to tertiary education. Otherwise, students who are low achievers may reject the option of going to higher education. This is clearer among high school students where educational attainment plays a critical role in deciding whether to move to post-secondary education. Another powerful determinant factor is socio-economic status. This factor can be identified by parents' education, income and occupation. For example, McDonough (1997) studied the role of social class and high school support on shaping students' perceptions of higher education opportunities. Other relevant factors can be associated with socio-economic factors such as gender ethnicity and school type (Leach & Zepke 2005).

2.1.1.2 Search stage:

The search stage is the following stage that students go through after their decision to enroll in tertiary education. This stage usually occurs two to three years before students graduate from high school. After students have made the initial decision to attend tertiary education, students move to the next stage of student college choice and consider several specific higher education institutions (Bergerson 2009). Students want to know specific information about higher education institutions in terms of programs offered, accreditation, location, fees and any other information that can help them determine which institution to attend (Leach & Zepke 2005). Therefore, information access and the type of information available play a huge role in the search stage. Looking at literature of student college choice, students get the information from diverse sources such as parents, relatives, school classmates, teachers, school counselors, university websites, fairs, university graduates, and friends (Furukawa 2011). Studies have shown that academic and career counselors in the schools play an important role in student access to information (Shahadat & Potsdam 2012; Simões & Soares 2010; Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper 1999; McDonough, 1997). Once students gather all the information required about selected higher education institutions, they narrow their options to a few choices. The students then move to the next stage of the decision making process.

2.1.1.3 Choice stage:

Choice is the final stage in the student college choice process. This stage occurs between 11th and 12th grade (Bergerson 2009). After deciding to attend tertiary education and searching for information about the options available to them, they make the final decision of choosing a higher education institution. There are comprehensive factors that substantially influence students in this final stage, such as the availability of their desired program, employment prospects, university social and academic reputations, accommodation, social life, quality of faculty, extra-curricular activities,

academic facilities, advice from others, scholarships, financial aid and student academic abilities (Bergerson 2009; Leach & Zepke 2005; Chapman 1981; Matzdorf, Smith & Agahi 2003). In the student college choice literature, both student and institutional characteristics determine the final choice.

In conclusion, student college choice is complex, and all three stages interact with each other. Although these factors are almost the same in all the literature, the results differ from one study to another in terms of the importance of the variables in each stage. In addition, many of these variables overlap between the three stages (Hamrick 2007). These differences indicate the complexity of the decision process as Leach & Zepke describe students' higher educational choice as "A complex nexus in which habitus, personal identity, life history, social and cultural contexts, actions and learning are inter-related" (2005, p.46).

2.2 Second: Developing student college choice models:

After examining the decision making process, researchers extensively studied the factors that influence student choice. Student characteristics, in particular, captured the researchers' attention when determining these factors. Students' background characteristics, such as gender, age, race, and socio-economic background, are the main variables of student factors in the literature (Bergerson 2009; Paul 2006; Al Fattar 2010). Additional student related factors are seen to be important, such as high school performance, self-image of attainability and course desirability, which are considered personal characteristics. The first student model explored here is focused on student characteristics. One of the main researchers who developed this model was Jackson in 1982. The Jackson model includes variables such as age, gender, socio-economic background, attainability, high school performance, school counselors, and parents' education (Vrontis 2007).

The second model is focused on characteristics of the institution. The main founder of this model was David Chapman in 1981. The Chapman model includes variables that

are fixed such as location, university fees, availability of preferred programs, reputation and campus environment. All of these characteristics are within an institution's control. Other researchers added more variables to institutional characteristics such as study flexibility, study mode, scholarship and financial aid offered, college reputation, and facilities (Price, Matzdorf, Smith & Agahi 2003). The main purpose of the Chapman model was to help institutions to develop an effective recruitment policy in order to communicate with students more effectively (Chapman 1981).

The third model is a combination of both the first and second models. This is known as the Hanson and Litten model, which was developed in 1982. It is most commonly used in the current literature because student choice involves both student and institution characteristics (Vrontis 2007). To be more comprehensive, all models complement each other in order to understand the complexity of student college choice.

2.3. Third: Going deeper into student college choice:

As depicted in the literature, researchers consider the issue in either broader or deeper senses (Pitre 2006). In the earlier models of student college choice, the issue was studied in the broader sense. Some researchers went into a deeper study of student choice of higher education institution. In other words, these studies focus on one variable of either student characteristics or institutional characteristics in order to examine the extent to which this variable affects student choice. Age, for example, is one important variable that compares mature and younger students, suggesting that mature students have different reasons to attend university than younger students (McCune, Hounsell, Christie, Cree & Tett 2010). In another study by Paul (2006), the differences between black and white students choosing college were examined. Likewise, Bergerson (2009) studied the process that students of color go through when they plan for post-secondary education.

There are other studies in the literature that not only focus on student characteristics, but also on institutional characteristics. For example, Wajeer also studied the type of university. This study examined the factors that influence students' choice between

traditional and metropolitan universities (1997). A further study done by McDonough (1997) examines one factor related to student social class and other factors related to school structure. As well as studying student college choice in particular variables, there are extensive studies examining the factors that influence non-traditional students. Those students can be disadvantaged students who are usually female, Latino, black, students with special needs, or students at risk (Hayden 2000; Akerhielm, Karen, Berger, Jacqueline, Hooker, Marianne, Wise & Donald 1998). Most researchers who have studied student college choice also investigated the sources of information that students rely upon when making their decisions and the extent of the influences of these sources.

2.4 Fourth: Developing policies to support students in college choice:

Although the last three decades of research focused on developing a general model of student college choice, recent studies have examined the role of the educational context which has shaped the post-secondary enrolment decisions (McDonough 2004). Student choice is a behavior and because behavior in society is culturally contextualized, it is important for researchers to understand the complexity of the issue and the combined factors that influence student choice. Any researcher who wants to study student college choice needs to decide which variables require investigation and which ones need to be ignored based on the country's education system and culture (Chapman 1981). Each country has its own higher education system that has an effect on student enrolment to tertiary education. In the UAE, for example, the UAE Higher Education Ministry requires each student should get ILETS or TOEFL qualifications to be eligible to enroll in university, regardless of whether if it is a government or private university. This may not be a problem for native students in the UK or Australia, but it is a major concern for Emirati students as English is the second language for them. Moreover, gender separated universities are a concern for some female Emiratis and would affect Emirati female college choice.

In drawing conclusions about student college choice from the literature, it is obvious that there are underrepresented student populations who have no access to higher education based on personal characteristics such as ethnicity, race, color, social class and gender. As a response, there are calls for strategies and policies to address the problem. Recent studies have witnessed the call for early intervention to develop outreach programs in K-12 to provide students with the skills, knowledge and information to enhance their decision making when choosing a college. These programs focus on two contexts: student centered and school centered (Hagedorn & Tierney 2002; Bergerson 2009).

2.5 Fifth: Critiquing the effectiveness of student college choice policies:

The effectiveness of college outreach programs and policies is the new paradigm in the current literature on student college choice. There has been a shift from institution recruitment policies to state and federal policies. The research looks to policies with a critical eye to examine how these policies are helping students to make better and more informed higher education enrolment decisions (Bergerson 2009; Hagedorn & Tierney 2002). In fact, the more recent studies in the literature do not attempt to discover new factors that influence student choice. There is no interest in developing new models of student college choice. Rather, the focus has shifted to explore the extent to which these factors influence student choice in particular countries in terms of gender, race, ethnicity and nationality (Bergerson 2009). Some researchers dig deeper to study the factors that influence students in choosing a particular type of institution.

After exhaustive analysis by researchers to understand the factors that influence student choice, the findings show that students' opportunity to access tertiary level is not equal. Therefore, the main concern in the recent literature is the effectiveness of programs designed to help underrepresented students to move and succeed in post-secondary education. These outreach programs play a huge role in student college success and retention. Tierney, Corwin and Colyar (2005) analyzed college preparation programs and identified various components of them; those elements include: academic

preparation, culture, family, and mentoring. Moreover, a study was done by W. Krist and Venezia to evaluate current policies and practices about higher education accessibility and equity in the U.S (2004). Both studies analyzed student college choice with a view to improve the likelihood of college attendance and success, particularly in underrepresented students.

2.6 Sixth: Student college choice in Dubai:

Most the studies about student college choice focus on countries such as Malaysia, Australia, United States, and UK. The Knowledge and Human Development Authority published a report with the Dubai School of Government in April in 2012 called “Making Higher Education Choices in Dubai” (AlFardan & Belrehif 2012). This report discussed the most important factors that influence students from different nationalities when they select their universities in Dubai. It shows that there are factors related mainly to institutional characteristics: international qualification, program offered, resources and facilities, reputation, location, cost and accommodation. In addition, the report looked at different influencers in making higher education choices; these included family, friends, school counselors, teachers, and mentors. However, there is no extensive study about Emirati student college choice in Dubai or in the UAE. Therefore, this study will examine Emirati college choice. It worth mentioning this study is not looking to develop a new student college choice model for Emirati students. Rather, this study explores the factors that influence Emirati students in high schools when they choose a specific higher education institution.

This study attempts to fill the knowledge gap and aims to help policy makers who work with K-12 students to implement transition policies and strategies to support students and enable a more informed college choice. Before moving to the theoretical framework, it is crucial to understand the current high school and higher education system in Dubai. Understanding the UAE educational system will help the research to develop the theoretical concept of Emirati high school student college choice based on the local context.

2. Contextual Background

Before explaining the theoretical framework, it is crucial to understand the national context of the K-12 and higher education systems in Dubai. The national educational context differs from one country to another and thus has an impact on the importance of factors in student college choice. Therefore, education system context is a major player in student college choice (Bergerson 2009). Below is a description of the current school and higher education system and student transition from secondary education to tertiary education in Dubai.

2.1 The K-12 system in Dubai

Grade 12 is the last year of school education for students in the UAE. The transition for students through elementary, preparatory and high school is smooth in the UAE educational system. For public school, the linkage between the three school levels is tied. For private schools, some schools have K-1 to K 12 classes in the same campus or they have strong linkages with other private schools to enable a smooth transition. In contrast, the linkage between both private and public high schools to higher education institutions is not strong enough.

A new policy was announced in 2012 by H.H Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid to make school education compulsory to all UAE nationals until age 18, or K 12. However, tertiary education is non-compulsory for UAE nationals. It is worth mentioning that education in public schools and federal universities is free for UAE nationals. Although there are free public higher education institutions, there is a continuous trend for Emirati students shifting from public sector to private sector in high school and tertiary level education (AlFardan & Belrehif 2012).

There are 227 schools in Dubai, composed of both public and private schools. Of this number, 78 are high schools. Private schools are run under the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (state authority) and public schools under the Ministry of Education (federal authority). Before 2008, there was no rigorous quality assurance

process for Dubai schools. Once the KHDA was established in 2007, they started to inspect all private and public schools until 2010. Since then, public schools have been under the remit of the Ministry of Education, and private schools remained under KHDA remit.

Table1: number of schools and Emirati students' grade 12 in Dubai.

	Number of schools	Number of Emirati students in grade 12
Number of private high schools in Dubai	55	1,311
Number of public high schools in Dubai	23	1,749
Total	78	3,060

* Statistics for the 2012/13 academic year (KHDA 2013)

2.2 Private schools

Most private schools in Dubai have career or academic counselors. The services of counseling and guidance to high school students vary from school to school. For example, some schools have one on one counseling, others may have general information about options available in higher education. The KHDA's Dubai School Inspection Bureau (DSIB) inspects private schools; they qualitatively evaluate the support given to high school students by the career counselors in an implicit way. Below is an example in how the career counseling service is observed in DSIB reports:

The quality of support was good for all students. A Career Day and multi-cultural program complemented after-school and student-led programs to support well-being and overall personal development. An informal counseling program for students with special educational needs was available but alternative strategies at the middle and high school were still developing for students with instructional and behavioral needs. The school was careful and precise in its management of attendance and punctuality and was supporting families that found this aspect of school life a challenge.

(KHDA inspection report, Etihad Private School, 2012, P10)

2.3 Public schools

In the UAE, the Emirati student transition from high school to higher education is drawn by Higher Education Ministry in the UAE. Emirati students in K-12 receive an application

form for three federal universities: Zayed University, Higher Colleges of Technology, and Emirates University. There is an option to study overseas as well. Students are asked to fill the form out and give it back to the teacher. The information available in the application is only basic information about the academic programs available in these public universities. There are no instructions available from the teacher or school counselors on application day. However, the schools usually take students on a campus tour to either Zayed University or the Higher Colleges of Technology in Dubai. The access to private higher education institutions to Dubai public schools to promote their programs and institutions is limited. In 2011, the Education of Ministry began an initiative to offer career counseling and guidance in UAE schools. According to Reem, the director of an education counseling facility in Dubai called Counseling Point, "a lack of information about options often forces students to take up courses they have little or no interest in.....such students are disheartened and confused and drop out" (Afshan 2011). Therefore, there is a plan by the Ministry of Education to assign a career counselor to every government high school by 2015.

One of the major concerns in secondary education is school drop-out. There is a high drop-out rate among Emiratis in high schools, particularly Emirati male students in public schools. According to the UAE Minister of Education "male dropout rates at the secondary level in public schools are estimated to be around seven to 10 per cent" (Afshan 2010). The absence of career guidance is one main causes of the high drop-out rate.

2.4 The higher education system in Dubai

There are 52 higher education institutions in Dubai, which have three different systems. There are 43,000 students enrolled in these universities, of which 20,000 are UAE nationals. Only three universities are federal while the other universities are private. It is worth mentioning that federal universities are sex segregated. The limited capacity in federal institutions was previously a concern as thousands of Emiratis were expected to enroll in tertiary level education per year (Office of Higher Education Policy and

Planning 2007). In response to this demand, the last decade has seen a dramatic increase in the number of private higher education institutions in Dubai. In fact, since Knowledge Village (the first purpose specialized free zone) was established in 2003, more private universities have been opened. Another free zone, Dubai International Academic City, was opened in 2007 to allow more universities and colleges to be set up. The classification of higher education providers is divided based on university location according to the KHDA higher education landscape annual report. These are constituted of federal, free zone universities, and outside free zone universities. Below is a description of the different types of higher education institutions (HEI):

Table2: Number of higher education institutions (HEI) and students in Dubai tertiary education (KHDA 2012).

HEI type	Number of HEI	Number of students	Licensed	Type (local, international)	Example
Federal	3	41%	MOHESR*	Local universities	Zayed University
Inside Free Zones	32	16%	KHDA	Mainly international branch campuses and a few local universities	Middlesex University, London Business School
Outside Free Zones	18	43%	MOHESR	Local universities	Canadian University of Dubai

*MOHESR: Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research of UAE.

Following the establishment of Dubai Knowledge Village, other free zones have opened in Dubai, including Dubai International Academic City, Dubai Silicon Oasis, and Dubai Health Care City (KHDA, Higher Education Landscape, 2012). As mentioned above, the

Dubai government established a number of free zones to attract more higher education institutions as a forward looking policy. The reason behind attracting international higher education providers is the demand of better human resources graduating from universities that have higher quality education standards in Dubai. (Davidson & Smith 2008). In order to facilitate the international presence of higher education, the free zone institutions are exempted from federal regulations (Lane 2010). Therefore, most of the higher education institutions in the free zones are international branch campuses from 10 different countries, including India, U.S, Australia, Russia, Pakistan, Lebanon, and the UK with little presence of local private universities. As a result, Dubai has the highest number of international branch universities in the world (KHDA 2012). In fact, the presence of international higher education providers reflects the current trend of the internationalization higher education arena across the world (Stisany & Gore 2012).

Although there are now more higher education options for Emirati students, the ambiguity about these institutions and their degrees makes it not easy for Emirati students to make the choice of which university to enroll in. In study about Dubai higher education policy issues, Lane states that “the lack of regulatory clarity creates confusion among students and institutions about local degree recognition” (Lane 2010, P. 2).

The complexity of the higher education system in Dubai comes from having two regulatory bodies. The institutions in free zones are licensed and recognized by the KHDA. The authority developed the Universities Quality Assurance International Board (UQAIB) in 2008 to assure the quality of the international branch universities and their programs in Dubai. The graduates of these international branch universities get international certificates which are certified and attested by KHDA. This attestation gives them recognition to work in any public and private organization in Dubai. It is not recognized by the other six emirates. The Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research licenses and attests their higher education institutions which are mainly outside free zones. The attestation of on these universities certificates allow their graduates to work in any public and private organization in Dubai and all emirates.

2.5 Enrolment in higher education institutions in Dubai

There is no issue of capacity or access for students to enroll in higher education institutions in Dubai in general, but the access to federal institutions is becoming limited to Emirati students year after year due to budget cuts by the UAE government (Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research 2007). In 2011, 8,545 Emirati students enrolled in the three federal higher education institutions, making up 41% of the total student number. However, there were more Emirati students in local private universities outside the free zones (8,786, 43%). In contrast, only 3,288 (16%) Emirati students enrolled in higher education institutions in the free zones (KHDA 2012). It is worth mentioning that Emirati students are the largest group of the total higher education population in Dubai, making up 43% of the total number. There has already been a 10% increase of Emirati students compared to the 2010-11 academic year.

2.6 Admission requirements for UAE nationals

The admission requirements for federal universities depend on two things. First, Emirati students require a GPA of 70% or above from high school. Second, students require a minimum score of 150 in the Common Educational Proficiency Assessment (CEPA). The CEPA is a bi-annual national examination that consists of an English test and a math test. The CEPA score determines whether a student is eligible to enroll directly into an academic program or is required to undertake a foundation year (CEPA 2012). CEPA examination is managed by the National Admissions and Placement Office (NAPO) at the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MOHESR). Besides that, the priority for enrolment in federal universities is for fresh high school graduates. Therefore, it is very important for students to pass the CEPA examination in order to be eligible to enroll into federal universities that are free of charge for UAE nationals.

For private universities, the admission requirements differ from one institution to another. Some private universities, mainly private local universities outside free zones,

accept students who have lower high school scores (less than 60%). The entry requirements mainly rely on high school grade and level of English. For the international branch universities, the entry requirements are similar to home country requirements.

3. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this study is conducted by looking at the factors that influence Emirati students' college choice. No one can argue the definite importance of student characteristics and institution characteristics that determine student college choice. Therefore, it is important to take into account both student and institution characteristics. The study depends upon a set of variables related to both student and institution factors, as follows:

1. **Student characteristics** include variables such as gender, socio-economic background, high school performance, advice from others, school counselors, student attainability and student educational inspiration.
2. **Institution characteristics** include variables such as tuition fees, scholarship and financial aid, university facilities, quality of faculty, programs offered, accreditation, language of instruction, location, size of university, university reputation, and employment of its graduates.

The selection of above factors and variables came after extensive study into student college choice in the literature. In general, the literature suggests that these variables influence students when deciding which post-secondary education institution to enroll in. Due to a lack of college choice studies for Emirati students, the researcher decided to look at the most common factors among student college choice research and consider the Dubai education system. Most of the students only go through this process once. Therefore, those factors are looked at from students' perspective, not from the college perspective.

Cost

When selecting a university, cost, financial aid, and scholarship tend to influence students' choice. Cost and financial aid are weighted heavily as determinant factors for student college choice, in particular, in the American literature (Bergerson 2009).

Chapman (1981) has indicated that the cost and finance availability to students have an impact on students. Students from higher income backgrounds would prefer to enroll in private universities while students from lower income backgrounds would prefer to attend community colleges or state universities. In another study by Paulsen (1990) to understand student enrolment behavior in the US, it shows that enrolment of students in higher education institutions would increase in general economic expansions and decrease in economic recessions. He believes that enrolment at tertiary levels is strongly linked with students' or parents' income. Similarly, another study done by school of Economics and Education in University Kebangsaan in Malaysia in understanding "factors influencing Households' Choice for Higher Education Institution in Malaysia" shows that financial aid was the most important factor (2001).

Employment

Employment is a key factor when students select a higher education institution. Several studies showed that students believe the link between education and employment is highly linked. (James 2000) In other words, students' employment prospects improve considerably with higher education qualifications (Paulsen 1990). This is not only in terms of career opportunities; students believe that the future earning potential would also increase (Al-Fattal 2010). Much of the research on employment factors considered the job opportunities that students get when they graduate from a selected university. If students are graduating from a specific university which guarantees a job in the workplace, students are more likely to attend that university (Tatar & Oktay 2006). Most of the competitive job markets are looking for graduates with good skills and knowledge. Therefore, the employment factor was reported as important in many student college choice studies as it increases their career opportunities (Wajeeh & Micceri 1997).

However, the employment factor is certainly a consideration for students but it usually does not come as first priority to students (James 1999; Tatar 2006; Kallio 1995).

Location

Research in student college choice has shown the importance of location in choosing a higher education institution. The location becomes crucial when students are from a lower socio-economic background and cannot afford accommodation. Students who attend universities outside their cities also view location as a determinant factor. According to Chapman's (1981) study of student college choice among high school seniors in California, location was of major importance to students. Half of the students (50%) selected universities within 50 miles of their homes. In addition, it reported that students who have more higher education alternatives are less likely to attend universities elsewhere. Similarly, James (1999) found students from isolated or rural areas are more concerned than urban applicants about location and availability of housing. Thus, location is associated with the financial resources available to students (McDonough 1997).

Advice from others

In several studies it is apparent that the advice students receive from their parents, family relatives, friends and counselors has a great influence on students' choice of post-secondary education. Chapman's (1981) study showed that parents (43%) are the main influencers followed by counselors (22%), other students (16%), teachers (10%), and finally college admission officers (9%). When students want to know more information about a selected higher education institution, they seek this information from different sources within their social network. This information is not only sought in the search stage; the final decision in choosing a higher education institution is also affected by the advice received from others.

Programs offered

The availability of programs is another factor that strongly affects students' decisions. In fact, it is universally rated as the most important factor when choosing a university (Price, Matzdorf, Smith & Agahi 2003; Chapman 1981). Hayden (2000) reported in his study about African American students' college choice that availability is more important than academic reputation or financial concerns. Likewise, a British study found that students would choose a higher education institution because of its provision of program if it is not offered somewhere else (Foskett & Hesketh 1997). Another study by Wajeeh and Micceri (1997) also reported that availability of the desired major ranked as the most influential factor for freshmen in choosing a metropolitan university. However, freshmen at traditional universities in a similar study ranked financial aid, low cost and good job opportunities as the most influential factors, followed by availability of the desired program.

Accreditation

Higher education institution accreditation was not emphasized a lot in the literature when determining college choice. In Chapman (1981), Paulson (1990) and Price, Matzdorf, Smith & Agahi (2003), the factor of accreditation was not included in their studies.

However, accreditation is very important for Emirati students. At the end of school academic year, the Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research warns students not to enroll in unaccredited higher educations in UAE. If students enroll in an unaccredited university, their certificates will not be equalized and recognized after graduation. Dr. Bader Aboul-Ela, director of the commission for academic accreditation at the ministry, said "Our warning to students is to go and look carefully at the accreditation of the university" (Swan 2012a, P1).

Looking to any job requirements in government organizations, it is clearly stated that a degree from a university accredited by the Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific

Research of UAE can guarantee the job (Swan 2012b). According to the American University of Sharjah Handbook, which explains how to choose a university in the MENA Region, accreditation means that a university meets all formal official requirements of academic excellence, curriculum, facilities and more “given by higher education ” (2012, P4). Therefore, students seek universities that provide qualifications which are recognized in the UAE work force. Therefore, accreditation is a critical factor for student college choice.

Student aspirations

Students’ aspiration to get a higher education qualification is a key factor in decision-making for tertiary education. Most research in student college choice emphasizes the importance of student aspiration in obtaining a higher education degree. It was noted that the major effect of student aspiration is in the predisposition stage, when students decide whether to enroll in tertiary education or not. The students’ aspiration usually starts 3-4 years before high school. Some researchers indicated that it could start as early as in primary school. In an Australian study by the Australian National Training Authority to investigate senior secondary students’ inspirations about post secondary plans, it noted that 90% have the intention to undertake tertiary education while less than 10% intended to go straight to the workplace (James 2000). However, as noted earlier in the contextual background, the issue of drop-out of Emirati students, in males in particular, is significant in high school. Therefore, considering the factor of student aspiration is valuable when studying student college choice.

Student attainment

One recurring factor in student college choice is student attainment. The academic achievement of students in high school affects their plan of post-secondary education. If students have high educational achievement in high school, there are more chances for them to consider the tertiary education (Leach & Zepke 2005). Although student

attainment has an impact on early stage of predisposition, it has a similar impact on the choice stage. Students of low academic achievement would not choose a higher education institution that is hard to a study in. In fact, school performance plays to a role on student beliefs whether a university would accept or reject them (Chapman 1981). Therefore, they may not choose and apply to a university that has high admission requirements.

Student characteristics are not limited to the above variables. This research excludes other student variables in college choice available in the literature because it is out of the UAE context. For example, student ethnicity and race were key determinant variables for all Western studies, while this is not an issue in the UAE. At the same time, it is a continuous debate in the US of using race and ethnicity as legitimate factors for college admission and financial aid for access to higher education institutions (Hagedorn & Tierney 2002). These issues do not exist in UAE social and education contexts. In terms of institutional characteristics, ranking may not be relevant because there is no reliable ranking system for higher education institutions in the UAE or in Dubai. Therefore, this variable may not be relevant in this study.

Institutional characteristics have more variables that correlate with student college choice decision. As indicated earlier, Dubai has 52 higher education institutions that differ from one to another in terms of quality, accreditation, international reputation, cost of program, availability of housing and transportation. Higher education in Dubai has complex systems that vary depending on federal and local regulations: federal, private, and international branch campuses.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The aim of this chapter is to describe the methods used in the study to understand college choice among Emirati students. To explore this topic, the researcher used a quantitative method to collect empirical evidence of factors that influence Emirati high school students in choosing higher education institutions. It also includes the sample selection, the main studies in the literature, the instrument used and its design, as well as the validity and reliability data collection process and data analysis procedures.

3.1 Sample selection

Researchers have used different samples of participants to study student college choice. The participants could be students, parents, school principals, school counselors or teachers. In the literature, student samples are mainly from grade 8 to grade 12 or from students currently attending university. The choice of sample depends on what researchers want to capture and when. For example, some researchers wanted to understand students' future plans and perceptions of attending higher education, while other researchers wanted to study students' actual behavior when choosing higher education institutions. In addition, as mentioned earlier in the literature review, students go through three stages: predisposition, search and choice, to make a higher education enrolment decision; hence, researchers wanted to understand the factors that influence their decisions at specific times. The sample of students in the literature was different based on students' characteristics such color and race or gender. For example, in the US, women are more likely to enroll in tertiary level education compared to men. The main sample, stage and method are cited in the literature review.

Table3: Main Studies in the Literature Review

Study	Sample	Stage	Method
Which University: The Factors Influencing the Choices of Prospective Undergraduates (James, Baldwin & McInnis 1999)	Students - applicants to tertiary education	Stage 3	Surveys + interviews
Understanding Student Choice of University and Marketing Strategies in Syrian Private Higher Education. (Al-Fattal 2010)	Students	Students in university	Surveys + interviews
Choosing College: How Social Class and Schools Structure Opportunity (McDonough 1997)	High school graduates, parents & counselors	Decision Stage (3)	Surveys + phone call interviews
Factors Influencing Households' Choice for Higher Education Institution in Malaysia. (Tin, Ismail, Sulaiman & Othman 2001)	Household		Surveys + interviews+ case studies
Factors Related to College Enrolment" (Akerhielm, Karen, Berger, Jacqueline, Hooker, Marianne, Wise & Donald 1998)	Students	Grade 8 - second year after high school	Survey
Applying to Higher Education: Information Sources and Choice Factors (Simões & Soares 2010)	Students	First year in university	Surveys
TAFE, University or Work? The Early Preferences and Choices of Students in Years 10, 11 and 12 (James, R. 2000)	Students	Year 10–12 Students	Surveys
The Impact of Facilities on Student Choice of University	Students	First year of university	Surveys
Factors that Influence the College Choice Process for African American Students (Hayden 2010)	Students	Freshmen	Surveys
Going to college: How Social, Economic and Educational Factors Influence the Decisions of Students (Hossler, Schmit & Vesper 1999)	Students + parents	Grade 9	Surveys + Interviews

The participants in this study are Emirati students from public and private high schools in Dubai in the 2012/2013 academic year. The sample contains male and female Emiratis. The focus of the sample is students who are still in the process of selecting a university. Two criteria were required for the sample: first, the sample must be in the traditional age of high school. The traditional age of high school students in the UAE is between 16 and 19 years old. Second, the sample must include only Emirati students and UAE residents of any other nationality.

The two criteria were selected to ensure that the participants are in the process of the three stages model of student college choice: predisposition, search and decision. The reason behind choosing Emirati students in high school is to study their actual behavior rather than their perceptions or preferences. Because they are in the last year of the school journey, the students have to make the decision whether to enroll in tertiary education. The study did not include university students, who have already completed the decision-making process.

A questionnaire is used to understand the factors that influence Emirati students' choice of higher education institution. This sample was chosen because students in K-12 are in the position of making a decision about their higher education route. In the UAE, K-12 is the year students leave the school and have the option to join higher education institution. Of the four students in the sample, two are from public schools and two are from private schools.

3.2 Instrumentation

Most of the studies in the literature use quantitative methods (questionnaires or surveys) to understand the factors that influence student choice of higher education institution. In the American literature, data is collected from the National Longitudinal Survey, Youth Cohort Survey, the National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972 (NLS72) and the High School and Beyond Survey (HSB) (Akerhielm, Karen, Berger, Jacqueline, Hooker, Marianne, Wise & Donald 2002). There is no such

available data source in UAE that allows the researchers to follow school leavers in this way.

The reason of using this method is to give a snapshot of student choice reality and for generalization. It is worth mentioning that the studies of student choice are usually descriptive because is meant to be a primary source that can be used by others for more in-depth analysis (Knussen 2006). On the other hand, researchers of student choice also used qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups to get in-depth information about student experiences. For example, a study by Hossler, Schmit & Vesper (1999) included in-depth interviews with students and their parents nine times between 1986 and 1994. These students were in junior years in high school. At the same time, thousands of students and parents were surveyed. The interview transcripts are available for each student interviewed. It was meant to examine the stages students go through and determine the factors that influence their decisions.

Because the behavior is culturally contextualized, numbers and statistics cannot express the unique experiences of students. Although there are several studies using both methods, such as Al-Fattal (2010); McCune, Hounsell, Christie, Cree & Tett (2010); James, Baldwin and McInnis (1999); and Oktay (2006). However, earlier researchers did not use the qualitative method, such Chapman (1982) and Foskett and Hesketh (1997). Because there are no studies in Emirati student college choice and there is a lack of data and statistics available, the decision was made to use the quantitative method throughout surveys in this study. This also allows further studies on this issue. It is worth mentioning that the quantitative approach extensively dominated the student college choice literature (McDonough 1997).

3.3 The design of the instrument

The design of the survey was intended to be easy, simple and short. The purpose of the instrument is to survey Emirati high school students on their college choice in the academic year 2012-2013. The first part of the survey is created to report on the

demographic information of students. This information is student age, gender, last year score, and both parents' highest degree in education. The second part of the survey included three main questions to report in the three stages. For the predisposition stage, students were asked if they would enroll in a higher education institution in the next coming year. If they answered yes, they were asked which university and which major they intended to enroll in. If they answered no, they were asked what their intentions were. The above questions are the only open questions in the survey. The purpose of open questions is to give respondents the opportunity to have their voices heard on the first and crucial stage of the student college choice process (Dawson 2009). The second stage was intended to understand the importance of certain items when they search for information about a higher education institution. The final stage was intended to understand the importance of 24 items of student and institutional characteristics in making the final choice of university. For the second and third stage, importance of factors was ranked using variables on the 5-point Likert scale. Its construction is as follows: 5 = very important, 4= important, 3=neutral, 2 = not important and 1 = not important at all. A copy of this instrument is provided in Appendix A.

3.4 Data collection process

To access Dubai public schools, approval from the Dubai Educational Zone and the Ministry of Education was required. No researcher is allowed to conduct any kind of research in schools without a letter from the Dubai Educational Zone to grant access to public schools. In order to get the approval from the Educational Zone, the (student) researcher needed a letter from the university that outlined the purpose of the research, research topic and research methods. In addition, it was required to attach the questionnaire in both languages. After obtaining the initial approval, the researcher was required to attend an interview held by the deputy of the Educational Zone. The purpose of the interview is to ensure that the (student) researcher understands the protocol of the research activity in the public schools and at the same time provides feedback on the questionnaire if required. It was necessary to inform the Dubai Educational Zone about the name and number of schools required for the study as these schools will be

contacted by the Zone and be sent the questionnaire in advance. The interview and final approval were granted in October 2012.

Once the approval was obtained, the next step to move further with survey was phoning the schools to get the appointment for the researcher to visit the school through the social workers as there are no academic counselors in public schools.

For the private schools, no permission was required from any government organization in Dubai. The only permission required was from the school principal. The communication was with career or academic counselors in the schools. The permission was granted after a review of the survey questions and a letter from the researcher's university. Therefore, it was easier to get access to private schools compared to public schools.

The researcher gave the schools, through counselors and social workers, the surveys and one week time in order to distribute it to the high school students. After continuous follow-ups, the results were given back to the researcher through counselors and social workers as well. There was no direct interaction between the researcher and students. All the results from the four schools were collected in November 2012. The schools were chosen by gender and type of school to generalize the analysis to high school students. No other criteria was important in selecting the schools for this study.

Below are the schools for the study:

Government schools:

- Al Rayah Girls' School
- Mohammed Bin Rashid Boys' School

Private schools:

- Dubai International School
- Al Ittihad Private School - Jumeirah Branch

Table 4: Demographic characteristics of the sample= (N=181)

School	Type	Gender	Student number	Response rate	Participants	Age
Al Rayah	Public	Female	120	25%	30	17-18
Mohammed Bin Rashid	Public	Male	50	78%	39	17-18
Dubai International	Private	Mixed gender	100	42%	42	16-18
Al Ittihad	Private	Mixed gender	96	73%	70	16-18

*Excluding students who had not mentioned their grades

3.5 Validity and reliability

The reliability of the data depends upon the “extent to which a test or procedures produces similar results under constant conditions on all occasions” (Bell 2005, P 117). Most the survey questions were based on other studies. Because the results of student college choice can differ from one time to another, the researcher ensured that the survey was distributed to schools at same time of the academic year. At the same time, the questions of the survey were short, direct and to the point. In terms of validity, it refers to the “appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of specific inferences made from test scores” (Gall, Borg, & Gall 1996, P 133). The survey questions were in Arabic for public schools and English for private schools, as explained in the instrument section. The questionnaire included the cover letter detailing the purpose of the study, the sample required and the time required to finish it. It also emphasized that participation to the survey is completely voluntary included a note of thanks for participation.

3.6 Data analysis procedures

After collecting all the surveys from the schools, the data was entered in computer Microsoft Excel and then to Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). To ensure the information was entered correctly, a second set of eyes helped to check the correctness of the data. The data was analyzed through a number of steps. In the first step, the database was cleaned of participants that had major data missing. Some of the participants only answered the first stage or second stages and left the third stage empty. Therefore, seven of participants were deleted from the database and not counted in the number of participants. Deletion is a common action done by researchers to deal with missing data in surveys (Dawson 2009).

In conclusion, the purpose of the study is to not to describe behaviors, processes, or perceptions that are associated with student college choice. The goal of this study is to develop an understanding about the factors that influence Emirati high school students when they select a higher education institution for tertiary education in Dubai, and the information sources they depend upon.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the questionnaire, in order to understand the factors that influence Emirati students' college choice. The data is summarized in tables by representing the variables by mean scores, standard deviations, and ranking to simplify it. The chapter includes data results on the three stages of college choice, factor analysis used and T test. The mean scores were used to examine the importance of the variables when choosing higher education institutions through ranking. Descriptive statistics are also used, such as frequencies, means and percentages.

4.1 Results of the data analysis

Predisposition stage:

The purpose of the first question in the survey is to explore the *predisposition* stage. For student college choice studies, the first question is usually asked to determine whether students have the aspiration to attend tertiary education or to leave the educational system. Therefore, the question of predisposition was direct: "will you be attending college next year?" The factors that influence students in this stage are related to student characteristics. Therefore, the students were asked about their parental education and last year's score. The purpose of this question is to examine the socio-economic status of the students, assuming students who have parents with high qualifications have a higher socio-economic status. However, it is worth mentioning that many students have not answered this question and this requires further investigation. Therefore, due to missing data on parents' education, the socio-economic status was disregarded in this study.

The results of the first question showed that 24 of the respondents have either not answered or answered with "I don't know", "it depends" or "maybe". The majority of the 157 students indicated that they intend to enroll in tertiary education next year. Of the respondents, 126 indicated the name of the university, 16 students indicated names of

two universities, and three students indicated the word “abroad”. In terms of the major they intend to enroll in, 130 students mentioned one program, 15 students mentioned two programs, and one student mentioned 3 programs. Other students kept this answer blank or wrote “I don’t know”, “not decided”, “it changes every week” or “no idea”. The table below shows the common field of programs for students in coming year.

Table5: Emirati students field of programs potential interest in tertiary education:

Field of programs	Frequency
Business	43
Engineering	29
Law	14
Aviation	11
Media & filming	11
Political science & psychology	10
Medicine	9
Nuclear engineering	8
Arts & design	5
Environmental science	3
IT	2
Education	1
Total student responses to this question	146

Table6: Respondent profile by gender and type of school.

	Frequency	Percentage
Male	105	58%
Female	76	42%
Private school students	112	62%
Public school students	69	38%

As shown in the table above, males have a better response rate in this study compared to females. In addition, 76% of Emirati male students considered attending a higher education institution in 2013. Almost all of the female respondents (97%) indicated they will be going to college in the next academic year. It is possible that only students with high commitments to attend tertiary education filled out the survey. However, the statistics of increased number of female Emiratis in higher education compared to male Emiratis is consistent with several studies about UAE enrolment in higher education (Office of Higher Education Policy and Planning 2007; Kenaid 2012).

The private school students are over represented in the sample. There is a possibility that the higher response to the student college choice surveys is a result of higher commitment toward tertiary education among private school students.

Search stage:

The second question of the survey is focused on the second stage of student college choice. Because this stage depends heavily on student search activities to investigate selected institutions, the purpose of this question was to evaluate the importance of information sources to Emirati students. In this stage, Emirati students are influenced by nine information source items when they search for a higher education institution to enroll in. Those nine items are divided into three categories: institutions, individuals and high school. The mean scores and standard deviations of the all participants were calculated to understand the importance of these factors on Emirati students. The higher scores (4.00–5) reflected the high importance of the factor, lower scores (0.0 – 2.99) reflected the low importance, while (3.00-3.99) mean scores reflected neutral position meaning neither important nor unimportant. The results are ranked in ascending order. Table 7 summarizes the mean scores and standard deviations for factors in search stage:

Table 7: Mean scores and standard deviations by item for the Emirati students for search stage:

Item	M	S.D	Rank
College website	4.11	1.12	1
College students	4.05	1.15	2
College graduates	3.83	1.21	3
A campus tour sponsored by the school	3.76	1.29	4
Friends	3.76	1.23	5
Parents, brothers or sisters	3.75	1.36	6
Admission brochures or campus catalog	3.73	1.21	7
High school teachers	3.71	1.10	8
High school counselors	3.66	1.24	9

The results of the mean scores indicate that there are no information sources that are considered not important to Emirati students. Most of the items are rated neutral (3.00-3.99) by participants. Only college websites and college students were rated important. The ranking of information sources items is based on the mean scores in descending order which indicates highest importance to lowest. It is interesting to see that college websites, one of the institutions' marketing tools, are ranked as the most important factor affecting Emirati students in the search stage. In addition, the first four items are factors related to institutions, showing how much Emirati students in the search stage rely on marketing strategies and recruiting activities done by universities and colleges in the UAE. However, it is worth noting that printed information such as admission brochures and catalogs are less important to Emirati students compared to other information provided by the higher education institutions.

These findings can be very encouraging to higher education institutions in Dubai, as they emphasize their huge role in providing information to students. Individuals such as parents, family members and friends are the second information sources that Emirati students depend upon to seek more information about colleges and universities. The third information sources are related to high school teachers and counselors. This

finding is the most shocking to observe. Emirati students indicated that teachers and counselors are the least important factor when learning about institutions. Finally, the results of Emirati students' information sources that they use to search and learn about higher education institutions are unique to the Dubai context. The reasons are explained in the discussion chapter.

Choice stage

The third question in the survey addresses the final stage in Emirati student college choice. In this final stage, students are influenced by 24 items based on student and institution characteristics. As with the second stage, the mean scores and standard deviations of the all participants were calculated to understand the importance of these factors on Emirati students when they decide which university to enroll in. The higher scores (4.00–5) reflected the high importance of the factor and lower scores (0.0 –2.99) reflected the low importance while (3.00-3.99) mean scores reflected a neutral position. The table below summarizes the findings for all participants:

Table 8: Mean scores and standard deviations by item for the Emirati students for the decision stage:

Items	M	S.D	Rank
Internationally accredited	4.62	1.11	1
My high school grade	4.62	0.82	2
Good academic reputation of university	4.55	0.72	3
My desire to have a college degree	4.55	0.94	4
Graduates get good jobs	4.53	1.09	5
Availability of the of the desired major	4.43	1.04	6
Good social reputation	4.33	0.93	7
Locally accredited by Higher Education Ministry	4.26	1.05	8
Wide choice of majors	4.08	1.20	9
Quality of academic facilities	4.04	1.07	10
Easy to study in	4.02	1.16	11
Quality/ attitude of faculty	3.93	1.21	12
Language of instruction is English	3.93	1.23	13

Scholarships and free education	3.88	1.13	14
My parents advice to enroll in this university	3.78	1.18	15
Opportunity for part-time work	3.69	1.27	16
High school counselors advice to enroll in this university	3.68	1.17	17
Size of college/campus	3.53	1.19	18
Language of instruction is Arabic	3.52	1.36	19
Friend suggested attending advice to enroll in this university	3.51	1.13	20
Extra-curricular activities	3.48	1.24	21
Low tuition/cost	3.23	1.28	22
Gender segregated environment	3.06	1.44	23
Wanted to be near home	3.04	1.38	24

As with the results of second stage, none of the items are rated below the mean score of 3.00, which indicates that all items are either important or neutral to Emirati high school students. From the 24 items, 11 items were rated important (the mean scores above 4.0) to high school Emirati students when making final college decision, while the rest of the items are neutral for the participants.

4.2 Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's Test

Before moving ahead with factor analysis, it is crucial to verify whether the sample is adequate. To measure the sample adequacy, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity measures were used. In the statistics, if the KMO value is greater than 0.5, the sample is considered to be a sufficient size in relevance to the number of items (Timothy 2006). Therefore, the data used for this study is adequate and acceptable as the KMO value is 0.766 to 24 items in the student college choice study. The purpose of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is to show whether there is a relationship between variables. If not, then it does not make sense to use the factor analysis. In addition, the Chi-Square analysis technique is used to test and validate the data as it

shows the significance between the groups at one time. The value of Bartlett's Test is considered significant if the value is 0.05 or less (Pallant 2007). The table below illustrates the value of high significance in Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Chi square= 962.582, $p < 0.05$) which indicates the appropriateness to proceed with factor analysis. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) is used to get the below results.

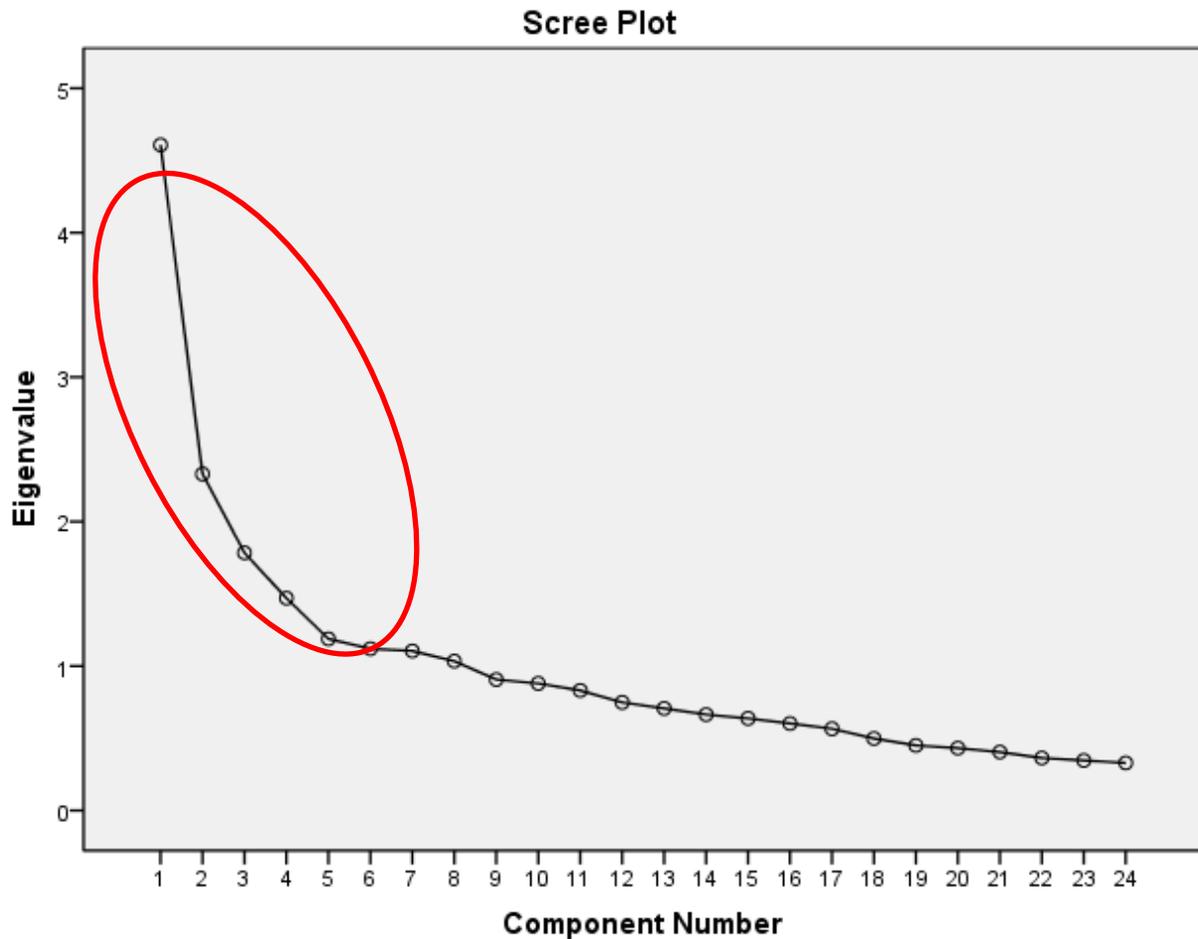
Table9: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.766
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	962.582
	Df	276
	Sig.	.000

4.3 Factor analysis

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is one of the most popular statistical techniques in student college choice. It is also widely used in evaluations of questionnaires or any testing instruments of multiple items (Brown 2006), especially when the researchers have no hypotheses about the nature of the underlying factor structure of their measure (Timothy 2006). The aim of factor analysis is to simplify complex sets of data (Kline 1994). In particular, EFA is used to determine the number of factors, choose an extraction method and then choose a rotation method. In the existing literature, use of the EFA technique is very common in student college choice studies. Therefore, an exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation is used on 24 items. These items were grouped into four scales to investigate the factor structure of the scale (Kinneer & Gray 2008).

Four factors were extracted through Principal Components Analysis which is usually the minimum number of dimensions (or factors) in pre factor extraction.



The purpose of this Scree Plot is to determine the number of factors or components to retain for factor analysis. Using Kaiser criterion, any component that has Eigenvalues above 1 is eligible as a component (Pallant 2007). As can be seen in the Scree Plot above, there are eight components with Eigenvalues above 1. However, only four components in the Scree Plot captured more of the variance than the remaining components (circled in red). Therefore, for the purposes of data reduction, it is recommended that those four components can be retained for further investigation. This decision is also supported by total variance explained in the table below and it shows that only the first four components explain a total of 42.45% of the variance (see Cumulative % column in table 10).

Table10: Total variance explained in factor rotation.

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared			Rotation Sums of Squared		
				Loadings			Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.607	19.197	19.197	4.607	19.197	19.197	3.701	15.420	15.420
2	2.330	9.706	28.903	2.330	9.706	28.903	2.464	10.268	25.687
3	1.783	7.430	36.334	1.783	7.430	36.334	2.094	8.726	34.414
4	1.470	6.124	42.457	1.470	6.124	42.457	1.930	8.044	42.457
5	1.188	4.950	47.407						
6	1.120	4.667	52.074						
7	1.104	4.602	56.676						
8	1.034	4.307	60.983						

4.4 Factor rotation

After a number of factors is decided, the following step is to interrupt them. Ideally in factor analysis, the factors are 'rotated' in order to present it in an easier manner by putting the variables strongly loaded together. According to Timothy Brown in Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Applied Research (2006, P 31) the purpose of factor rotation is "to foster interpretability by maximizing factor loadings close to 1.0 and minimizing factor loadings close to 0.0". Therefore, items are considered highly loaded if the value is above .4. The Varimax method is widely used by the researchers (Pallant 2007).

The table below shows rotated factor loadings through correlations between the variables and the factors. The variables are disturbed as the following: 13 variables are loaded quite strong in factor 1, five variables loaded in factor 2, two variables loaded in factor 3 and three variables loaded in factor 4. The table also shows what is called 'simple structure' which means most variables are loaded highly in one component (Kline 1994).

Table 11: Factor loadings for exploratory factor analysis using a Varimax rotation and principal components extraction

	Component			
	Factor1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Quality of academic facilities	.686			
Wide choice of majors	.656			-.212
My desire to have a college degree	.631	-.356		
My parents advice to enroll in this university	.607			
Graduates get good jobs	.561	-.278		-.235
High school counselors advice to enroll in this university	.532		-.222	.340
Opportunity for part-time work	.506	.400		-.233
Extra-curricular activities	.505			-.236
My high school grade	.485	-.418		
Language of instruction is English	.477			
Locally accredited by Higher Education Ministry	.460		.396	
Quality/attitude of faculty	.457			-.288
Language of instruction is Arabic	.414	.210	-.380	.217
Internationally accredited	.291			
Wanted to be near home		.698		
Low tuition/cost		.641		
Size of college/campus	.260	.468		
Easy to study in	.207	.463	-.283	
Academic reputation	.355		.597	.426
Availability of the of the desired major	.297		.549	
Gender segregated environment	.227	.253	-.398	.283
Good social reputation	.253		.389	.553
Friend suggested attending/advice to enroll in this university	.375	-.209	-.401	.466
Scholarships and free education	.261	.333		-.339

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

- a. 4 components extracted.
- b. Bolded items are loaded strongly on factors

The items in the decision stage were calculated by Principal Component Analysis by using the Varimax rotation solution. This step is the last step to finalize the number of factors. As shown in the table, the last two factors have two to three variables which is very low to be considered as determinant factors compared to the first and second factors (Kinnear & Gray & Colin 2008). Therefore, the researcher has taken the decision to count the first and second factors only, as the purpose of factor analysis is data reduction and to eliminate invalid data. As a result, the first two components were considered for this study.

Each component is labeled by the researcher based on high loading of the variables in each component. The first factor is labeled academic since the variables mainly related to academic issues (academic quality, employment, instruction language, and student academic inspiration). The second factor is labeled personal due to variables related to student personal characteristics (cost, location and student attainment). Further analysis is based on the above dimensions (academic and personal).

The academic factor consists of variables that are highly correlated together according to the factor analysis. Hence, there are four major scales including items of academic quality, programs offered, job guarantee and accreditation. The second personal factors contain three items which are cost, location and student attainability.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter will provide a discussion of the findings, review research questions prior to previous literature, limitations of the study, implications for future research and conclusion.

5.1 Information sources:

Research question: *What are the most important information sources for Emirati students in the search stage?*

The purpose of the research questions is to identify the factors that influence Emirati students' college choice during the selection process, and determine what information they use when they seek information about higher education institutions. In order to answer these questions, it is important to look to eight main information sources students depend upon during the search stage. The findings suggested that during this stage, Emirati students look to different information sources to gather information about the higher education institutions they want to enroll in. The findings of this study are not consistent with previous studies in information sources in student college choice literature.

The findings in chapter four showed that Emirati students depend heavily on the information provided on institutions' websites. Other studies of student college choice show that students ranked the information provided by institutions or "marketer-controlled sources" at the top (Shahadat 2012).

A study done by Simões and Soares (2010) looked at information sources and choice factors for freshman students at universities in Portugal. In this study, the students were asked to rank the most-used sources of information when they had chosen a higher education institution from four categories (marketer controlled, interpersonal, third-party independent, direct inspection of the service). The findings showed that marketer-

controlled sources were the most useful sources of information for the students. Within this category, 35% of the students ranked “institutions’ websites” as the top sources used. In addition to websites, the “university brochures and leaflets” and “promotional visits to secondary schools” ranked as the three most significant sources of information.

In contrast, earlier studies suggested that printed materials have little influence on prospective students’ choice. In David Chapman’s (1981) study, students indicated that it was hard to evaluate information provided by institutions. Students noted that they received tens of these documents and that they had difficulty reading them all. However, these printed materials were considered in confirming the decisions they had already made about the intended college, rather than helping students in the search stage. During the search stage, students were more concerned with information provided by their friends and families.

Although the findings of students’ reliance on institutions’ controlled sources can be beneficial for institutions in Dubai to enhance their marketing strategies and recruiting activities to attract more students, this may raise serious concerns to policy makers. In the UAE, there are no clear regulations on institutions’ websites by government bodies or non-commercial organizations.

The most important interpretation that could be drawn from the source data is that school counselors and teachers are ranked at the bottom by Emirati students. One of the reasons for this low ranking could be that there are no counselors in the two public schools. As a result, students have no services or guidance to aid their college transition. Another reason for the low ranking is the effectiveness of counseling in college preparation. According to a study by the KHDA on higher education choices, it noted that counselors have little knowledge about the higher education choices available in Dubai (AlFardan & Belrahif 2012). Therefore, students trust information sources that seem more knowledgeable such as college students and graduates, instead of school teachers and counselors. In order to help students make better choices, the role and effectiveness of school counselors needs to be addressed (Tierney, Corwin & Colyar 2005).

Many studies in the literature showed the importance of schools counselor and teachers as a very useful source of information for college choice. In a 1997 study, Foskett and Hesketh studied the decision timing and factors that influence the decision making process of 16-year-old students in England and Wales. In their study, they found that 42% of students chose career counselors and school teachers compared to 18% who chose “institutions’ open evenings/days” and 3% “institutions’ presentations at schools”. In contrast, the students reported parents 9% and friends as 2%. In addition, other studies supported this finding where teachers and counselors are considered as major information sources (Simões & Soares 2010; Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper 1999; McDonough, 1997). In the UAE, this is considered to be a critical issue according to Alia Huwidi, who has been a counselor for 15 years in the UAE. Huwidi said that “The problem we are facing currently is that students are unable to take decisions on their own. They are mostly influenced by parents. In many cases, students are clear on what they want to be but they have no idea how to get there, so students are in need of guidance and information” (Shahbandari 2012).

5.2 Emirati student college choice

Research question:

What are the factors that influence Emirati students in college choice?

- What are the institutional characteristic factors that influence Emirati students’ selection process in college choice?
- What are the student characteristic factors that influence Emirati students’ selection process in college choice?

The purpose of the second research question is to understand the factors that influence Emirati high school students when they choose a higher education institution in the choice stage. As it was explained in chapter four, there are two main factors that influence Emirati students when deciding which university to enroll in. The first and major factor is the institutional factor. Emirati students are concerned about the quality of teaching and employment.

Accreditation

Emirati students ranked international accreditation as the most important variable when they choose a higher education institution. Although international accreditation is not legally required by employers in Dubai, students consider it to be very important. In contrast, local accreditation is required in the job market and especially among local and federal government organizations. This finding is also supported by another study done by the KHDA, *In Search of Good Education*, which stated “the main factor Emirati students consider when choosing a Dubai-based branch campus of a foreign university is the perception that the international qualifications have greater value” (2012, P. 43).

One of the reasons why international accreditation is crucial for Emirati students is the massive economic boom in the country. The UAE economy, Dubai in particular, became more modernized and there is a continuous increase of foreign businesses and international investments. Because Dubai has many international companies and organizations, Emirati students think that the job market values and recognizes the qualifications from international higher education institutions. Therefore, there is an increased preference from students and government in ‘Western Style’ education at university level. This finding also supports the Dubai government’s direction to attract more international universities. In fact, Dubai has the highest number of international branch universities in the world (KHDA 2012). In addition, the federal universities such as Zayed University and Higher Technology have recently obtained international accreditation for their programs. Similarly, Abu Dhabi has also attracted branch universities to set up in the emirate. The preference of ‘western-centric’ education in emerging economies is a global trend in higher education (Stiasny & Gore 2012).

Another reason for increased demand for international accreditation is student mobility. When a student has a qualification from an international higher education institution, the student can be easily accepted into international universities for further education. There are many Emirati students who continue their education in western countries and hence international recognition is crucial for Emirati students.

Student attainment

The results of this study demonstrate that high school grade is very important when Emirati students consider a university to enroll in. It is the second ranked item after international accreditation. The entry requirement for federal universities is a minimum 70% GPA for high school students. Emirati students cannot access any federal university if their high school grade is lower than 70% while some private universities accept less, as explained in earlier chapters. Therefore, Emiratis believe that high school grade is a major determiner for accessing higher education institutions. This finding is also supported by various studies in the literature. Leach & Zepke pointed out in their study that educational attainment is not only a crucial factor in the choice stage, but it is also important when students first consider joining tertiary education in the predisposition stage (2005). In this study, when students were asked about their plans if they did not enroll in tertiary education, only 14 students indicated that they would join the work force. All other students showed an interest in enrolling in tertiary education. Therefore, the high ranking of education attainment is considered as a critical determinant factor in choosing a higher education institution. This finding is also consistent with Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper's study where student attainment was revealed to be the second strongest factor, after parents' involvement, to influence students not only in the earlier stages but also in the final decision stage (1999). Ease of studying in the university is another item ranked as important for Emirati students besides school grade. Similar findings reported in other studies showed that students with lower grades in high school are less likely to succeed in university education (McDonough 1997). Although Emirati students are looking for good quality education, students still are expecting easy education as well. Therefore, Emirati students' educational attainment plays a huge role when students select a higher education institution.

Student educational aspirations

The third important factor for Emirati students is the aspiration to get a college degree. Most of the survey participants indicated that they would enroll in a higher education institution next year. In fact, the number of Emirati students attending tertiary education is continuously increasing (KHDA 2011). A college degree is considered to be a more important factor in selecting a university than its cost or location. Various research studies indicated that students' aspiration to get a college degree affects their post-secondary plans (James, Baldwin & McInnis 1999). Although the students' aspiration plays a role in the earlier stages when they plan to pursue higher education, it also influences their final choice in which university will help them to fulfill their dreams (Al-Fattal 2010).

Obtaining a higher education qualification is logical in the UAE job market. In recent years, a high influx of experienced expatriates to the UAE has caused an employment gap to UAE nationals. The unemployment rate for Emiratis was 14% in 2011, while it was less than 4% for non-nationals. Although there are many reasons behind employment, education plays a huge role. There is a strong relationship between education and employment and no one can argue the importance of higher education qualifications in terms of higher payments and better employability (James 2000). Also, most societies perceive a higher degree as better than a school certificate. This finding is also supported by an Australian study of senior high school students who reported that obtaining a university qualification is a good investment in the future (James 2000). Therefore, for Emirati students, a higher education qualification is a key factor in decision-making for tertiary education.

Employment

Getting a good job as a graduate is one of most influential factors when Emiratis select a higher education institution. This finding is similar to numerous studies in student college choice. There is no doubt a strong relationship between education quality and

future career prospects. In the UAE, as mentioned above, there is a high rate of unemployment, therefore, students want to enroll in a higher education institution that helps them in getting a better future career in the Dubai job market. This is not a new finding, there is an extensive amount of research in the literature that states students' desire to enroll in higher education institutions that increase their job opportunities, especially in a competitive job market. The results are also consistent with Tatar & Oktay's (2006) study, where they investigated Turkish students' behaviors in search and choice. One of the major results showed that students are more likely to attend a university that guarantees a job for its graduates. Furthermore, in Wajeeh & Micceri's (1997) study, students in traditional universities rated 'graduates get good job' as the second highest in its influence on university choice, while students from metropolitan universities ranked this as the 13th most important factor because the students are already employed. Therefore, the employment factor was reported as important in many student college choice studies as it increases their career opportunities. However, the employment factor is certainly a consideration for students but it usually does not come as a first priority to students (James 1999; Tatar 2006; Kallio 1995).

Availability of program majors

The result of this study showed that Emirati students are concerned about the availability of both a wide range of programs and desirable programs. It scored as one of the 10 top influencers when they select a university. Most studies in student college choice at international and national levels support this finding. For example, an Australian study reported that the availability of programs that interest students is the main reason for choosing a higher education institution (Leach & Zepke 2005). Likewise, in a British study by Foskett & Hesketh (1997), students asserted that they would choose a higher education institution because of its provision of program that is not offered somewhere else. Nationally, a recent study was done by the Dubai School of Government about higher education choices in Dubai. In this report, the results of a student satisfaction survey in Dubai showed that 1,178 national and non-national university students rated "the programs offered" as the first factor in selecting a higher

education institution (AlFardan & Belrehif 2012). Moreover, in another study done by the KHDA (2012) in the higher education landscape, it reported that 50% of students enrolled in the business and management field. Because of high demand, most programs offered in higher education institutions in Dubai are business programs. In fact, many studies rated availability of programs as the most important factor when choosing a university (Price, Matzdorf, Smith & Agahi 2003; Chapman 1981).

Advice from others

Parents, school counselors and friends have the least influence on Emirati high school students. Parents and school counselors are rated at the bottom in the search stage as well as the final choice stage. Again, this finding is not consistent with previous studies in college choice. For example, the findings of Hossler, Schmit & Vesper's study (1999) showed that parents' influence is very strong in all college choice stages, though they have more influence in the earlier stages compared to the final choice stage. Similarly, Leach & Zepke believe that parents have a greater influence in the predisposition and search stages and less influence in the final choice stage (2005). Likewise, Chapman's (1981) study showed that 43% of parents are the main influencers followed by counselors (22%), other students (16%), teachers (10%), and finally college admission officers (9%). Although other studies indicated the high importance of others in shaping student post-secondary choice, the findings in this research suggest the opposite. The low importance of parents' advice is also supported by a KHDA report about parents' involvement in their children's education. It is indicated that Emirati parents are not involved enough in their children's school education (Al Sumaiti 2011). The low ranking of parents and school counselors need further investigation. In a study by AlFardan and Belrahif (2012) it is shown that the absence of central sources of information makes it difficult for school career counselors to provide students with truly comprehensive information about higher education institutions in Dubai. It seems that Emirati high school students tend to prefer to interact with the post-secondary community like

college students and graduates where their information could be seen as more reliable than the school community.

Cost

In this study, the results showed that Emirati students do not consider cost as a major determiner in their college choice. It ranked at the bottom and viewed its importance as neutral for Emirati students. This finding is not consistent with other studies in student college choice, where cost and financial aid are major influencers on students' decisions. This finding is supported by another study done by the KHDA, which indicated that Emirati parents are ready to pay for their children's education (Kenaid 2011). Likewise, Fardan and Belrahif's (2012) study also indicated that financial help was ranked at the bottom. In addition, the availability of federal universities, which are free of charge for all UAE nationals, makes the cost and financial aid unnecessary. In fact, in 2012, 62% of high school Emirati fresh graduates are enrolled into federal higher education institutions (KHDA 2012). Although there are not many financial aid systems such as education loans provided to Emirati students to pursue their tertiary education, this is not considered as a barrier to college access. As indicated in chapter two, there is no issue of accessibility in higher education because of the availability of 52 diverse higher education institutions in Dubai (KHDA 2012). The availability of free university and diverse higher education options make the cost and financial aid less influential in Emirati students' college choice. In addition, enrolment at tertiary levels is strongly linked with students' or parents' income. However, because of the absence of information about Emirati parents' income, it would be inadequate to draw this finding.

Location

Location ranked as the variable that least influences Emirati student college choice. This is not a surprising finding because most of the participants are Emiratis and living in emirate of Dubai. At the same time, most of the respondents reported that they want to go to higher education institutions based on Dubai. In fact, Emirati families are

reluctant to send their females abroad for further education and universities based in the country are the preferable choice (AlFardan & Belrehif 2012). This result is also supported by a study done by the KHDA to investigate the reasons behind selecting private schools; it shows that Emirati parents are concerned about quality more than location. One parent stated that “the location of the school is not important. What is important is the quality of education the student gets” (Kenaid 2011, P 21). On the other hand, the location rose as an issue in the literature when students’ accommodation is far away from the university location, especially when they have to move or drive from one state to another (James, 2000). Similarly, in Chapman’s study (1981), 50% of high school students in California considered location as a major influencer on college choice. The availability of housing and accommodation was raised as important factor as well in these studies. In contrast, students in Dubai ranked the availability of housing as the least important factor (AlFardan & Belrehif 2012). Therefore, the location of higher education institutions is the least important factor for Emirati students in this study.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This chapter includes research limitations, implications for further research and recommendations.

6.1 Research limitations

This research has limitations. Firstly, the sample size of 181 Emirati students is considered to be very small compared to the number of Emirati students graduating from high schools (about 3,500 students). Due to the length of the process required to access 77 public and private schools to reach the sample, only four schools were considered for this study. Though the sample is small, it was representative of the student population in Emirati high schools. Secondly, the methodology of this research captured the numbers and statistics of Emirati college choice because there is no data available for Emirati students to track their path after they graduate from high school. As students' university choice is a very individualized decision, the lack of Emirati students' experiences contributed to the study limitation. Including a qualitative research instrument could add more live experiences to this research.

6.2 Implications for future research

Follow up research can be done to this sample to see if they have done as they planned while they were in high school. In this research, the intention was to understand Emirati students' college choice in high school. A follow up study can be conducted to learn about student college choice for Emirati freshmen in public and private higher education institutions in Dubai. The purpose of this would be to examine their experiences after making their college choice decision and going through the decision-making process. This would help to get a clearer picture of Emirati college choice.

Dubai is becoming an international hub for higher education and there are more international students coming to study in Dubai. At the same time, the UAE population consists of 90% of expatriates, and higher education institutions are also seeking to recruit students from other nationalities because the majority of the Dubai population is non-nationals. A future study could include their nationalities in the survey to see how

Dubai-based students of different nationalities make their college choice compared to Emiratis in Dubai. Such research could help universities and colleges in attracting more of the population.

6.3 Recommendations for higher education institutions:

- Emirati students in high schools rely heavily on information offered by the institutions themselves. If the institutions want to attract more Emirati students, they need to work on offering and enhancing the information available on their websites.
- The internationalization of higher education institutions is the first priority for Emirati students. Also, internationalization is a current trend in the higher education field. Therefore, if universities and colleges want to attract more Emiratis, they need to work on the concept of internationalization through working on international accreditations and connections with international universities.

6.4 Recommendations for policy makers:

- Policy makers need to pay attention to the information available on the internet. The accuracy and evaluation of this information on university websites is a concern.
- Counselors' role in helping Emirati high schools students' needs to be addressed. The findings in the search stage demonstrated that counselors are the least important information sources for Emirati students. The effectiveness of counselors will help students to make better college choices. Therefore, more counseling training in college preparation needs to be considered for school counselors.
- There is a need for academic awareness programs from the government for high schools to help students to make informed college choice.
- Tracking of Emirati students after leaving schools and in-depth knowledge of where they go, which higher education institution they enroll in and the program

they choose is crucial to enable policy makers to examine more details in how student structure the college choice and hence concentrate on intervention programs.

- Access to information should be made more widely available to Emirati students. Most students depend on online resources to seek information about universities.

References:

- Afshan, A. (2010). Why more Emirati boys quit schools? Khaleej Times. [online] 20 June, p.14. [Accessed 19 Sept 2012]. Available at:
http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle09.asp?xfile=data/theuae/2010/June/theuae_June530.xml§ion=theuae
- Afshan, A. (2011). The National: <http://www.thenational.ae/news/uae-news/careers-counselling-to-lower-school-dropout-rate>
- Akerhielm, Karen, Berger, Jacqueline, Hooker, Marianne, Wise & Donald. (1998). *Factors Related to College Enrollment: Final Report to the Office of Planning and Evaluation Services*. United States Department of Education.
- Al Sumaiti, R. (2012). *Parental Involvement in the Education of Their Children in Dubai*. Dubai: Dubai School of Government.
- AlFardan, H & Belrehif, F. (2012). *Making Higher Education Choices in Dubai*. Dubai: Dubai School of Government.
- AlFattal, A. (2010). *Understanding student choice of university and marketing strategies in Syrian private higher education* [online]. [Accessed 22 Mar 2012] Available at: etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/1115.
- Bell, J. (2005) *Doing your research project- A guide for first-time researchers in education, health and social science*. 4th edition. UK: Open University Press.
- Bergerson, A. (2009). *College Choice and Access to College: Moving Policy, Research and Practice to the 21st Century*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Bradshaw, George; Espinoza, Suzanne; Hausman, Charles. (2001). The college decision-making of high achieving students. *The Journal of Higher Education*. Vol. 77(2) pp. 15 - 23. [Accessed 20 Mar 2012] Available at:
<http://search.proquest.com/docview/225613291?accountid=15192>
- Braxton, J., Hirschy, A. & McClendon, S. (2004). *Understanding and Reducing College Student Departure: ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Brown, T. (2006). *Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Applied Research*. (Methodology in the Social Sciences). US: Guilford Press.

Chapman, D. (1981). A Model of Student College Choice. *The Journal of Higher Education*. Vol. 52(5). pp. 490-505. [Accessed 21 Mar 2012] Available at:
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1981837>

Commission for Academic Accreditation. (2012). *Institution wise Enrollment for the last 4 Academic Years* [online]. [Accessed 22 Mar 2012] Available at:
<https://www.caa.ae/caa/DesktopModules/InstEnrollment.aspx>

Davidson, C. & Smith, P. (2008). *Higher education in the Gulf States: shaping economics, politics and culture*. London. The London Middle East Institute.

Dawson, C. (2009). *Introduction to research methods: a practical guide for anyone undertaking a research project*. Oxford. UK

Emaratalyoun. (2012). The 51.5% of Emiratis prefer to complete their study at private university, a new study said. 14 March, P. 8. [Accessed 30 September 2012]. Available at:www.emaratalyoun.com

Foskett, N. & Hesketh, A. (1997) Constructing choice in contiguous and parallel markets: institutional and school leavers' responses to the new post-16 market place. *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol. 23(2) pp. 299-330.

Furukawa, (2011). *College choice influences among high-achieving students: an exploratory case study of college freshmen*. Dissertation PhD. University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Gall, D., Borg, R. & Gall, P. (1996). *Educational Research: An Introduction* (8th Edition). White Plains, NY: Longman.

Greenfield, T. (2002). *Research methods for post graduates*. 2^{ed} ed. London. Arnold.

Hagedorn, L. & Tierney, W. (2002). *Increasing access to college: extending possibilities for all students*. New York: State University of New York.

Hamrick (2007). *The College Choice Experiences of Pakistani Undergraduates in the United States*.

http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/57677/jhamrick_1.pdf;jsessionid=5CB33DF7B7652D223304C3D416C6040D?sequence=2

Hayden, M. (2000). *Factors that Influence the College Choice Process for African American Students* [online]. Masters. Thesis. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. [Accessed 12 June 2013]. Available at:

<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/available/etd-05182000-14100013/unrestricted/thesis.pdf>.

Hossler, D., Schmit, J. & Vesper, N. (1999). *Going to college: How Social, Economic, and Educational Factors Influence the Decisions Students Make*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

http://www.khda.gov.ae/CMS/WebParts/TextEditor/Documents/EducationalStatisticsBulletin2010-11_Final_Eng.pdf

James, R. (2000). *TAFE, University or Work? The early preferences and choices of students in years 10, 11 and 12*. Leabrook, South Australia: NCVET.

James, R., Baldwin, G. and McInnis, C. (1999). *Which University? The factors influencing the choices of prospective undergraduates* [online]. [Accessed 10 February 2011]. Available at: www.dest.gov.au/archive/highered/eippubs/99-3/whichuni.pdf

Journal of Research in Higher Education, 36(1), 109-124.

Kallio, R. E. (1995). Factors influencing the college choice decisions of graduate students.

Kenaid, K. (2011). In search of good education: why Emirati parents choose private schools in Dubai. Dubai. Knowledge and Human Development Authority.

KHDA. (2011). *The Higher Education Landscape in Dubai Report 2011*. Dubai. Knowledge and Human Development Authority. Dubai [Accessed 5 Mar 2012] Available at: <http://www.khda.gov.ae/Pages/En/helandscapeen.aspx>

Kinnear, P & Gray, Colin. (2008). *SPSS 15 made simple*. Psychology Press. UK

Kline, P. (1994). *An Easy Guide to Factor Analysis*. New York: Routledge

Knowledge and Human Development Authority. (2011). *Statistics for Private Schools in Dubai 2010/2011*. Dubai. Knowledge and Human Development Authority.

Knowledge and Human Development Authority. (2012). *Al Ittihad Private School – Jumeirah inspection report*. [online]. Dubai: Knowledge and Human Development

Authority. [Accessed 23 January 2013]. Available at:

http://www.khda.gov.ae/DISB/AttachmentDownload.aspx?DOC_ID=fVkuwglSvhk%3d

Knowledge and Human Development Authority. (2012). In search of good education: The facts behind Emiratis in private schools in Dubai.

[http://www.khda.gov.ae/CMS/WebParts/TextEditor/Documents/Emiratis%20in%20Dubai%20Private%20Education%20EN%2031-10-2012%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.khda.gov.ae/CMS/WebParts/TextEditor/Documents/Emiratis%20in%20Dubai%20Private%20Education%20EN%2031-10-2012%20(2).pdf)

Knowledge and Human Development Authority. (2012). Statistics for Private Schools in Dubai 2010/2011. [online]. Dubai: Knowledge and Human Development Authority.

[Accessed 23 January 2013]. Available at:

<http://www.khda.gov.ae/CMS/WebParts/TextEditor/Documents/PrivateSchoolsLandscapeReport2012-13En.pdf>

Knowledge and Human Development Authority. (2012). Unpublished data from the Dubai Schools Census in 2012/2013.

Kumar, R. (2011). *Research methodology: a step-by-step guide for beginners*. 3rd ed. London. SAGE publications Ltd.

Lane, J. (2010). International Branch campuses, free zones, and quality assurance policy issues for Dubai and the UAE.

http://www.dsg.ae/en/Publication/Pdf_En/DSG%20Policy%20Brief%2020%20English.pdf

Leach, L & Zepke, N. (2005). Student decision-making by prospective tertiary students. [online]. New Zealand: Ministry of Education. [Accessed 23 March 2013]. Available at:

www.minedu.govt.nz/goto/tertiaryanalysis

M. W. Kirst, and A. Venezia (ed.). (2004). *From High School to College: Improving Opportunities for Success in Postsecondary Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

McCune, V, Hounsell, J, Christie, H, Cree, V, & Tett. (L 2010). Mature and younger students: reasons for making the transition from further education into higher education. *Teaching in Higher Education*. Vol. 15 (6). pp. 691-702. Education Research Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 24 February 2012.

McDonough, P. (1997). *Choosing Colleges: How Social Class and Schools Structure Opportunity*. US: State University of New York Press.

- McQueen, R. & Knussen, C. (2006). *Introduction to research methods and statistics in psychology*. London. Pearson Educational limited.
- Mograby, A. (1999) *Human development in the United Arab Emirates: education in the Arab world*. Abu Dhabi: Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies and Research
- Naidoo, A. (2011). <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/uae/education/rapid-growth-for-higher-education-sector-1.924655> *Gulf News*
- Niu, S. & Tienda, M. (2008). Choosing colleges: Identifying and modeling choice sets. *Social science research* [online]. Vol. 37(2) pp. 416 - 433. [Accessed 21 Mar 2012]
Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2007.06.015>
- Office of Higher Education Policy and Planning. (2007). Educating the next generations of Emiratis: A master plan for higher education.
http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/United%20Arab%20Emirates/United%20Arab%20Emirates_Higher_Education_plan.pdf
- Pallant, J. (2007) *SPSS survival manual: A step by step guide to data analysis using SPSS for Windows third edition*. Markono Print Media Pet Ltd. Singapore.
- Paul, P. (2006). College choice: a study of African American and white student aspirations. *College Student Journal*. Vol. 40 (3). Pp. 562-574. .[Accessed 23 Mar 2012]
Available at: education.wsu.edu/directory/faculty/pitrep/cv.pdf
- Paulsen, M. (1990). *College choice: understanding student enrollment behavior* [online]. [Accessed 21 Mar 2012] Available at:
<https://myzu1.zu.ac.ae/PDFS/,DanaInfo=.awxyCiwojHnnKs19+ED333855.pdf>
- Price, F., Matzdorf, F., Smith, L & Agahi, H (2003). *The impact of facilities on student choice of university* [online]. Vol. 21(10). pp 212-222 [Accessed 10 February 2011].
Available at <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/0263-2772.htm>
- Realizing Bakke's Legacy: Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity, and Access to Higher Education
- Shahadat, H. & Potsdam, S. (2012). *Sources of information students use to select colleges – a proposed study using multiple response analysis: ASBBS Annual*

Conference. Las Vegas. [online].[Accessed 18February 2011]. Available at:

asbbs.org/files/ASBBS2012V1/PDF/S/ShahadatH.pdf

Shahbandari (2012). Gulf News:

<http://m.gulfnews.com/news/gulf/uae/education/helping-guide-uae-pupils-to-right-careers-1.1037329>

Shattock, M. (1996). *The creation of a university system*. Oxford. Blackwell Publisher Ltd

Simões, C. & Soares, A. (2010). Applying to higher education: information sources and choice factors. *Studies in Higher Education*. Vol. 35(4). pp. 371-389.

Stiasny, M & Gore, T. (ed.). (2013). *Going global: identifying trends and drivers of international education*. UK: Emerald Group Publishing limited.

Swan, M. (2012). Education ministry warns UAE students of unaccredited online degrees. *The National* [online] 12 Nov, p.1. [Accessed 19 Oct 2013]. Available at:

<http://www.thenational.ae/news/uae-news/education/education-ministry-warns-uae-students-of-unaccredited-online-degrees#ixzz2iAvMpo00>

Swan, M. (2012). Free-zone degrees now guarantee students government jobs. *The National* [online] 16 Jan, p.1. [Accessed 19 Oct 2013]. Available at:

<http://www.thenational.ae/news/uae-news/free-zone-degrees-now-guarantee-students-government-jobs>.

Tatar, E & Oktay, M. (2006). *Search, Choice and Persistence for Higher Education: A Case Study in Turkey* [online]. [Accessed 4 Mar 2012] Available at:

<http://www.ejmste.com/022006/d7.pdf>

Tierney, W., Corwin, Z & Colyar, J. (ed.). (2005). *Preparing for College: Nine Elements of Effective Outreach* (Sunny Series, Frontiers in Education). US: State University of New York.

Timothy, B. (2006). *Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Applied Research*. New York: Guilford Press.

Tin, B., Ismail, R., Sulaiman, N. & Othman, N. (2001). *Factors Influencing Households' Choice for Higher Education Institution in Malaysia* [online]. [Accessed 14 Mar 2012]

Available at: www.wseas.us/elibrary/conferences/2011/Penang/.../EDU-11.pdf

Vanson, S. (2009). *Next step: university and college guide*. Dubai. Hotcourses Middle East.

Vrontis, D., Thrassou, A., & Melanthiou, Y. (2007). A contemporary higher education student-choice model for developed countries. *The Journal of Business Research*. Vol 60 (2). pp.979-989.

Wajeeh, E & Micceri, T. (1997). *Factors Influencing Students' College Choice at Traditional and Metropolitan Universities* [online]. [Accessed 14 Mar 2012] Available at: isis.fastmail.usf.edu/surveys/RePDF/199705_1.pdf

Questionnaire

My name is Hanan AlFardan and I'm student in final year International Policy Management in Education in British University in Dubai. My dissertation is about factors that influence Emirati students when choosing a higher education institution.

This questionnaire has been designed to gather information for how Emirati students make college choice decision in Dubai.

This questionnaire has been circulated to Emirati students in grade 12 in both public and private schools. It will take approximately 10 minutes of your time to complete.

Your participation in this project is **completely voluntary** and you are free to decline the invitation to participate, without consequence, at any time prior to or at any point during the activity. Any information you provide will be kept confidential and used only for the purposes of this study and will not be used in any way to reveal your identity. All questionnaire responses, notes, and records will be kept in a secured environment.

There are no risks involved in participating in this activity, beyond those risks experienced in everyday life.

Thank you for very much for your time to complete this survey.

Student information

- Age:
- Gender:
- Last year grade:
- Parents highest degree in education: Father Mother.....

Preposition stage:

2. Will you be attending college next year?

If yes, which college? _____ Intended major _____

If not, what you will do? _____

Search stage:

4. Listed below are *sources of information* about colleges that students often rely on when choosing a college. Please indicate how important these sources are important to you in helping you to choose a college.

	Not very important	Not Important	Neutral	Important	Very important
A campus tour sponsored by the school	1	2	3	4	5
Admission brochures or campus catalog	1	2	3	4	5
College website	1	2	3	4	5
Friends	1	2	3	4	5
Parents, brothers or sisters	1	2	3	4	5
College students	1	2	3	4	5
College graduates	1	2	3	4	5
High school teachers	1	2	3	4	5
High school counselors	1	2	3	4	5

Choice stage:

Please indicate how important each of the following characteristic is to YOU in making your college choice.

	Not very important	Not Important	Neutral	Important	Very important
Institution & student characteristics					
Good Academic Reputation of University	1	2	3	4	5
Good Social Reputation	1	2	3	4	5
Size of College/Campus	1	2	3	4	5
Locally accredited by Higher education Ministry	1	2	3	4	5
Internationally accredited	1	2	3	4	5
Low Tuition/Cost	1	2	3	4	5
Scholarships and free education	1	2	3	4	5
Availability of the of the desired Major	1	2	3	4	5
Wanted to be Near Home	1	2	3	4	5
Easy to study in	1	2	3	4	5
Quality/ Attitude of Faculty	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunity for part-time work	1	2	3	4	5
Quality of Academic facilities	1	2	3	4	5
Extra Curricula Activities	1	2	3	4	5
Wide Choice of Majors	1	2	3	4	5
Gender segregated environment	1	2	3	4	5
language of instruction is English	1	2	3	4	5
language of instruction is Arabic	1	2	3	4	5
Graduates Get Good Jobs	1	2	3	4	5
My desire to have a college degree	1	2	3	4	5
My parents advice to enroll in this university	1	2	3	4	5
high school counselors advice to enroll in this university	1	2	3	4	5
Friend suggested attending advice to enroll in this university	1	2	3	4	5
My high school grade	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you