

**Improving the teaching and learning of  
Home Economics in Kuwait from Teachers  
and students  
Perspectives on Engaged Learning Approach**

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## الملخص:

### تطوير تعليم وتدريب الاقتصاد المنزلي في الكويت من وجهة نظر المعلمات والطالبات حول طريقة التعليم التشاركي

تقوم المجتمعات المتقدمة بتطبيق طريقة التعليم التشاركي كأسلوب تدريس من قبل المعلمات وتأثيره على تعليم الطالبات في الفصل، وهدفت هذه الدراسة إلى معرفة وجهات نظر المعلمات والطالبات حول كفاءة تدريس وتعليم الاقتصاد المنزلي من خلال طريقة التعليم التشاركي، و إن كان له تأثير على طرق التدريس، تحضير الدروس، و التربية بجانب دافعية المتعلم، والمشاركة الصفية، واستراتيجيات التعلم وكذلك تحليل مخرجات التعلم ، و تم إجراء تلك الدراسة على ست مدارس حكومية على ست معلمات وستة طالبات، وتم اختيار العينة عشوائيًا في منطقة العاصمة في المرحلة الثانوية بدولة الكويت في عام 2015، واعتمدت الدراسة على المنهج الوصفي باستخدام المقابلات؛ حيث تم طرح الأسئلة على المشاركات حول وجهة نظرهن عن طريقة التعليم التشاركي، و تم عمل مقابلة مع كل طالبة ومعلمة في كل مدرسة لمعرفة تأثير التعليم التشاركي على عملية التدريس والتعلم ، وأشارت النتائج إلى أن الطالبات يفضلن التعليم التشاركي في تعليمهن، وكذلك أشارت إلى أن معظم المعلمات يفضلن استخدام التعليم التشاركي في التدريس، وعلى الرغم من ذلك فإن بعض المشاركات أشاروا إلى تحدياته من واقع خبراتهن وأنها من أفضل استراتيجيات التعليم التي تناسب استخدام التعليم التشاركي من خلال تطبيقه داخل الفصول مع وجود إشراف من المعلمات.

الكلمات المفتاحية : التعليم التشاركي ، الاقتصاد المنزلي ، كفاءة التدريس ودافعية التعلم.

## Improving the teaching and learning of Home Economics in Kuwait from Teachers and students Perspectives on Engaged Learning Approach

### Abstract:

Modern societies have identified Engaged learning as an influential teaching and learning approach. This paper aims to know the perspectives of teachers and students on the Teaching Proficiency learning Home Economics through engaged learning. Influence on the teaching approach, teaching preparation, and pedagogy as well as learner motivation, participation, learning strategies, and learning outcomes were analysed. This study was conducted in six randomly chosen government schools using a study population of six teachers and six students in high school in the Kuwait City during the year 2015. The Qualitative study method was used by conducting interviews. The participants were questioned about their views on engaged learning. One teacher and one student from each school were interviewed to find the impact of the engaged learning on the teaching and learning process. Results indicated that students preferred the engaged learning in their learning. And teaching. Teacher responses also indicated that most of them preferred using engaged learning for teaching, however some of the participants experienced challenges, and it was concluded that the best strategy that aligned with the utilization of engaged learning was implementing it in classrooms under the supervision of teachers.

**Keywords:** *Engaged Learning, Home Economics (HE), Motivation, Teaching Proficiency.*

## Introduction:

Educational theories underpin positive behaviours and student engagement for increasing student achievement. For example, these theories inform a teacher's organisation of their teaching and learning environment and how these environments and the teaching and learning process benefit the effective assimilation of the stimuli that students receive while they learn (Schunk, 2008). Engaged learning has been widely used as a potential teaching and learning strategy that has been correlated with these theories and been applied by educators in many parts of the world. However, limited studies have explored the effect of this approach in the Kuwaiti school education system.

This study identifies the perspective of teachers and pupils toward using engaged learning using a study of six Kuwaiti teachers and six students from six different high schools in the capital of Kuwait, the "Kuwait citydistrict". In addition, it evaluates their perspective toward the effects of engaged learning on teaching and learning process. Teacher's approach, preparation, and delivery of the Home Economics (HE) lessons as well as the students' motivation to learn, class participation, learning strategies and learning outcomes were analysed. This paper then highlights the teaching and learning strategies that were considered by the participating teachers and students to be the most beneficial for facilitating an effective engaged learning environment. The study also identifies the challenges that the teachers and students faced during the engaged learning. Finally, this paper contributes some recommendations in enhancing the teaching and learning processes in Home Economics in Kuwaiti schools through the engaged learning approach.

## Background:

The critical importance of education process in improving the quality of human lives and national prosperity has led many pedagogical decision-makers to give greater care to improve and enhance pedagogical abilities of teachers as well as student achievements (Hunt, 2012). This understanding has been the motivation behind this study that evaluated incorporating engaged

learning as a new technology in Home Economics in Kuwaiti schools. Generally, psychologists work with human memory and attempt to find the best solutions for people to effectively remember information and many studies have targeted developing teaching technologies focusing on this aspect. As remembering issues is considered a vital point it is necessary that to help to achieve better learning outcomes, teaching tools that have supportive role on the remembering and understanding process have to be linked in such a way that the usage of such technologies work with mind controllable sides (Deignan, 2009). However, since the 1980s, followed by the rapid developments in information technology, educators have been forced to meet the demand for learning that also aligns with the learners' real life-experiences, for constructivist learning methods that are more student-centred and for more interactive learning experiences that completely engage the learner for meaningful learning process (Madden, 2010). Furthermore, a primary consequence of these changes is the move from traditional educational systems toward "engaged learning", which is an approach to teaching that moves beyond the goal of student's gaining, banking and proving their knowledge, to learners being empowered to transform the acquired knowledge into significant new ideas that will generate deeper critical thinking. Also crucial is developing the needed skills and equipping learners to face the ever-increasing demands of the post-information age, where knowledge-flow is considered to have greater impacts on the society that works on the best knowledge gained.

### **Significance of the Study**

- It is important to investigate Kuwaiti educational practices in order to determine if these practices are catering to developing learner skills.
- It is important to develop meaningful learning in Kuwait schools .
- It contribust in transfer the center of learning process form teacher to student.
- Some research studies related to Kuwaiti curriculum have identified a strong focus on procedural knowledge, using standard rules and algorithms (Alajmi, 2004)
- With reference to a limitation in available data on engaged learning in Kuwaiti education this research is timely in trying to understand

and evaluate the perceptions of Home Economics teachers and students of their current and future classroom agency to develop and introduce engaged learning.

- It is important to understand whether as Al-Kandari and Al-Hellal (2014) reported, students would be showing more willingness to learn when provided with opportunities for interactions.

### **Aim and Research Questions**

The aim of the study was to measure the influence of engaged learning on the teaching approach and learning outcomes.

Four research questions guided the study:

1. How does engaged learning influence the teaching approach, preparation, learning strategies and delivery of the HE lessons?
2. How does engaged learning approach influence the student's motivation, class participation, and learning outcomes?
3. Which education strategies are more beneficial for facilitating an engaged learning environment?
4. What strengths and limitations do teachers and students might experience in engaged learning environments?

### **Review of Literature**

Engaged learning is a pedagogical approach in which students are active participate in the learning process. Engaged learning in the Home Economics Education therefore provides the context for students to actively participate in the learning of the subject to develop clear understanding , practices and dispositions. “A learner engaged with a particular topic, it is argued, is someone who is seen to be engrossed in, and actively challenged by what is involved, connected to and immersed in a particular topic for a significant period of time. During that time, the topic is thought to be intriguing, stimulating and even entertaining” (Teixeira-Diasa, Pedrosa de Jesusb, Neri de Souza & Watts, 2005, p.1123). Literature review has showed a strong connection between engaged learning as a learning style and the educational theories concerning behavioural learning (Dewey, 1916; Skinner, 1993), cognition (Piaget, 1976; Ausubel, 1968; Derry, 1996), social cognition (Bandura, 2001; Deignan, 2009; Duschl, 2008) and

social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Chen et. al. (2008) the engagement is defined as student-centered interaction, peer-to peer collaboration and active learning, which is positively related to the quality of the learning experience. In addition, engaged learning is the process in which students actively participate in their learning. With emerging technology, engaged learning could be nurtured by orchestrating diverse activities and resources including technology.

The review of theories pointed out that social constructivist theory that defines learning from a social perspective and especially social networks are important avenues of learning. It is noteworthy that social networks in learning can control configuration of the learning environment. Social constructivist theory highlights that when individuals interact within their society as well as in their social networks learning takes place as the interaction leads to changes in learner behaviour as well as re-creation of real life processes and objects (Gredler, 2009; Wilson, 2003). Vygotsky (1978) also has agreed that child development and transformation of behaviour are controlled by social interactions.

"Engaged learning provides opportunities for students to work cooperatively with a purpose. Learning groups are formed according to the purpose of instruction, common needs, and interests. Working cooperatively allows students to develop social skills and problem solving skills" (Janes, et. al., 2000, p.28). Moreover, VanDeWeghe and Sterling (2009) argued that engaged learners are responsible for their own learning. These students are self-regulated, capable of defining and evaluating their own learning goals and achievements.

They are also energized by their learning and empowered by their joy of learning they develop stronger understanding, creative thinking as well as a lifelong passion for solving problems. Therefore, engaged learners are considered as a strategic party, where they know how to learn and are able to transfer knowledge to solve problems creatively. (Walker, & Greene, 2009). Engaged learning also involves being collaborative that is, valuing and having the skills to work with others. The University of Michigan's (2016) Centre for Research on Teaching and Learning has identified five key engaged learning outcomes

through a 2014 'Provost Task Teams on Engaged Learning and Digital Instruction'. These are 1) Intercultural Engagement 2) Creativity 3) Self-Agency, and the Ability to Innovate and Take Risks 4) Communication, Collaboration and Teamwork and 5) Civic/Social Responsibility and Ethical Reasoning.

In addition, teacher's "judgments about their abilities to promote students' learning" (Woolfolk Hoy, & Spero, 2005, p. 343) also are important determinants that decide teaching approaches and learning environment. This particular aspect of teaching behaviour influences learning strategies and in order to have engaged learning, tasks need to be challenging, authentic, and multidisciplinary, such tasks are typically complex and involve sustained amounts of time. These tasks need to correspond to the tasks that learners come across at home and workplaces.

### **Students' Behaviour**

A learner's collaboration with learning as well as involvement with tasks often takes place with peers and teachers within the school as well as with family members and others in the real world outside of school. These tasks often require integrated instruction that incorporates problem-based learning and other aspects required by the curriculum (Kugler, 2012). Even though engaged learning has been identified as a powerful strategy, assessment of engaged learning involves presenting students with authentic tasks, classroom observation, interviewing, and examining their presentations and artefacts to assess what they actually know and can do. This assessment often called performance-based assessment is propagative in that it involves students in generating their own performance criteria and playing a key role in the overall design, evaluation, and reporting of their assessment. The best performance-based assessment has to be ongoing as well as in close connection with the curriculum and instruction. Assessment should also represent all meaningful aspects of performance and should have equitable standards that apply to all students (Ron et. al., 2011). Engaged learning is therefore a strategy that has been welcomed by many educators as higher levels of engagement would lead to positive student behaviour, achievement and academic performance as opposite to disruptive

behaviour, absenteeism, and dropping out of school (Klem& Connell, 2004, pp. 1-2).

In addition, Jamieson and Bellingham (2009) found that the classroom must be conceived of as a knowledge-building learning community, for engaged learning to happen and that such communities not only develop shared understandings collaboratively but also create empathetic learning environments that value diversity and multiple perspectives. These communities constantly search for developing and nurturing strategies to build on the strengths of all of its members. It is worth to conclude that truly collaborative classrooms, schools, and communities encourage students to ask good questions, define problems, lead conversations, set goals, have work-related conversations with family members and other adults in and out of school, and engage in entrepreneurial activities.

Prieto (2011) argued that the role of the teacher in the classroom has shifted from the primary role of information giver to that of facilitator, guide, and learner. As a facilitator, the teacher is assigned with the duty of providing a rich learning environment and learning experiences needed for collaborative study. The teacher also is required to act as a guide - a role that incorporates mediation, modelling, and coaching. Often the teacher also is a co-learner and co-investigator with the students. On the another hand, one important student role is that of an explorer. Interaction with the physical world and with other people having varied skills and capacities allows students to discover new concepts, change perspectives and apply their best skills. Students are then encouraged to reflect upon their discoveries, which is essential for the student as a cognitive apprentice. Apprenticeship takes place when students observe and apply the thinking processes used by other practitioners. Students also become teachers active processersby integrating and implementing what they have learned (Tyler, &Boelter , 2008). Hence, they become producers of knowledge, capable of making significant contributions to the world's knowledge. Jones andHosein(2010) revealed that engaged collaborative learning could be achieved by some strategies developed as engaged learning indicators.

The literature review showed an agreement between engaged learning and Dewey's (1916) idea about an early-expressed notion that learner-led investigation and problem solving will promote both the students' critical thinking skills and the potential for them to take responsibility for their own learning. Agreement is also shown between engaged learning and Vygotsky's (1978) theory that learning is a constructive process, where students take what has already been learned and, use personally relevant new knowledge gained through their own investigation, participate in discussion and experimentation, and build a new knowledge base. Also, engaged learning includes student-to-student and student-to-teacher interaction that demonstrates its link to a number of social education theories, including those put forward by Aquino et. al. (2009), Deignan (2009), Duschl, (2008) and Lumpkin (2007), all of whom found agreement in the idea that constructivist learning was partly a social event, enacted between students and teachers as well as between students themselves, their behaviours and their environments, as suggested by Bandura (2001) who expanded the definition of social.

From the agreement demonstrated between the educational theories found in the literature reviewed and the essential character of engaged learning, it is possible to articulate an expectation for engaged learning. At the forefront of these is the expectation that engaged learning can only happen in the context of social interaction between teachers, students, and their environment and that student and teacher efforts in this context is considered essential for learning. In other words, students who only momentarily think about or interact with information and who only briefly interact with others around them concerning the information will not experience full engagement and will therefore limit the development and effectiveness of their critical learning skills (Newmann, 1986). From this finding, it can also be argued that engaged learning would therefore need to be encouraged beyond the time limits assigned by the curriculum that students would need to be encouraged to continue their engagement with the subject and with other students concerning the subject, in their own time.

### **Teachers' Behaviour**

Moreover, engaged learning agreed with many previous theories regarding learning. Most previous researchers approved that engaged learning has an influence on the teachers' behaviour and approaches as well as students' learning outcomes. According to Alrushiedat and Olfman (2013) engaged learning in blended learning environment has benefits such as fixing in asynchronous online discussions for business statistics classes needed for majors of information system. The authors also conducted experiments online with students and the discussions showed promise for improving students' learning in business statistics classes. Alrushiedat and Olfman examined and compared the impacts of anchored asynchronous online discussions (AAODs) and standard synchronous online discussions (AODs) on students' participation and engagement in a blended learning environment. The results showed that, AAODs facilitated better quality participation and engagement for undergraduates. Also, the results provided useful insights for enhancing student interaction towards aiding learning.

According to Gibbs and Poskitt (2010) students who are highly engaged feel connected to the school, teachers and peers, they possess a sense of agency ready to expend effort and also show commitment to learning. Such students will also be intrinsically motivated in their learning, feeling confident about one's ability to learn and achieve. The authors also argue that well-engaged students possess and use self-regulatory processes and are also capable of using their skills in a better manner, these qualities compared to marginally or poorly engaged students are much different. The latter group, though being present in the class is not committed to learning or achieving, lack interest and do not respond well to their work but behave only for extrinsic rewards or out of fear of sanctions. On other hand, the literature suggested that as students are involved with learning, they move between different levels of engagement and internal factors such as perceptions of self-efficacy, motivation and interest in a subject area play a key role for their conceptual understanding and levels of engagement, and also external factors such as the nature of the teaching and learning they experience in their classrooms. The engagement itself would be related to their

learner behaviour in the class (behaviourally engaged), their experience with emotional comfort and connectedness (emotionally engaged) an also cognitive engagement that happens at the end of the former levels of engagement. In essence, behavioural and emotional engagements are preconditions of cognitive engagement (Brown et al., 2009).

In order to investigate learning process, Warriner (2010) studied the experiences of three adult learners of English in the United States, in their local communities of practice and also examined if the policies and pedagogical practices of the adult ESL program in which they joined had any impact on their sharing of knowledge as learners. This study on the engaged learning found that language acted as a barrier when learners shared knowledge with others. According to Warriner, even though the learners of English managed to learn and adopt the practices of the community of practice, they had to face many challenges in doing so and to some extent remained different and excluded from real membership in other communities of practice. In addition to that, Hartas (2011) studied home learning and its influence on the family for children in the first decade of this century in England and the findings demonstrated that children have the capability to share learning. The study also showed that irrespective of socio-economic status, parent also engaged with various learning activities roughly equally. It is also well known that the informal learning spaces and the time students spend between classes could be used to study, reflect and actively engage with content. This is the so called informal classroom. For example, according to Wright (2017) Tech and Gaming Clubs in schools could achieve many objectives, such as: ‘enhancing access and equity, inspiring personal growth, opening new thought horizons, supporting and complimenting the curriculum, representing the school's values, conjuring wonder and creativity through investigative learning, providing collaborative activities that serve as anchors for the development and reinforcement of positive human relationships’.

### **Engaged Learning in Classrooms**

It is worth to mention that, Zheng et. al. (2014) studied the collaborative and engaged learning in classrooms, using the new

generation students as sample population. According to the researchers, collaborative learning was chosen as a topic as it was one of the key instructional strategies adopted worldwide. Three approaches were proposed in this study for future Computer-Sup-approach Collaborative Learning which was a pedagogical approach, where learning takes place via social interaction using a computer or through the Internet.

After that, the researchers analysed the key problems regarding the effectiveness of computer-supported collaborative learning in classroom collaborative learning. They concluded that easy, engaged, and effective collaborative learning was preferred by the new generation students. On the other side, Coll et. al. (2014) studied the capacity of learning environment to contribute to the understanding of the assistance supplied by the teacher via feedback for providing knowledge building among higher education students. These students were working in small groups in virtual learning environment uploaded online. They conducted their study by examining 145 contributions made by one teacher to two groups of postgraduate students. The findings of study indicated that, the teacher introduced both elaboration and verification feedback for the learning content and students' approach to the academic task and the students' participations in the group also contributed positively to learning. Silverthorn (2006) reported that his students enjoyed learning and responding in an interactive classroom, however, the author reminded that a group of faculty members who attempted implementing active learning in their classrooms experienced that such changes in teaching and learning strategies were not simple. This also reminds that engaged learning strategies could have their own barriers to learning and that all students would not be equally able to handle such learning situations.

### **Engaged Learning in the Home Economics classroom**

As identified through a literature review, the subject Home Economics has been taught using a traditional teacher centred approach. There has been little research into the viability of applying engaged learning approaches and the scope of this method in the light of teacher and student interest in the method. Indeed, it is unknown whether teachers and students would accept the approach. Hence it

sought answers to the following research questions about the place of engaged learning in Home Economics classrooms. For the approach to gain a place in Kuwaiti education it is imperative that it exercises intervention in student and teacher interest, learning and outcomes. Al-Kandari and Al-Hellal (2014) reported that students showed more willingness to learn when provided with opportunities for interactions and also with computational models and they also developed more concrete ideas of the learned concepts such as mathematical relationships and physical concepts. Hence it is ideal to study and expand on the views of educators as well as students of HE by addressing such factors within the context of Kuwaiti school systems followed by discussions and recommendations.

### **Methods and Procedures**

Qualitative study method was used by conducting interviews with the participants. This study thus used an interpretive paradigm (Merriam, 1998) and a descriptive study approach. As the study focused on several aspects regarding the teaching approach, class participation, students' motivation to learn, learning strategies, and learning outcomes, in order to achieve the main objectives of this research, interviews with teachers as well as students were conducted. The study was conducted over a six weeks' period commencing in March, 2015.

Several questions were asked during the interviews, each question measured a specific objective of the study. Also, the interviews included several questions aimed to measure teachers' and students' behaviour towards engaged learning in the classrooms. The responses were analysed by the researcher using content analysis to understand the participants' views and opinions toward enhancing the teaching and learning process through the engaged learning approach.

### **Sample**

The sample included six teachers and six of their students. To maximise the relevance of the study to the Kuwaiti context as seen by the researcher, teachers of Kuwaiti nationality were chosen.

The study population included six state high schools from the Kuwait city district. A sample of six Home Economics teachers and six

of their students were selected randomly to participate in this study based on conducting interviews. In other words, one teacher and one student were selected from each school. The participants were interviewed by asking them direct open ended questions about the engaged learning approach that they have already experienced in HE classrooms. In addition, the participants were interviewed in different sessions and at different times. It was guaranteed that none of the participants could affect others' responses or thoughts.

### **Data Analysis**

Data was collected primarily through interviews with the participants, and secondary sources of data collection were previous studies related to the improvement of teaching and learning process through the engaged learning approach. Interview data were analysed to conclude the participants' opinions and behaviour towards implementing engaged learning in the HE classroom and their behaviour towards applying engaged learning in Kuwaiti schools. The interview responses were analysed by the researcher using deep analysis of contents, where the researcher tried to recognize challenges and difficulties that the respondents feared they might face while applying the engaged learning approach.

### **Research results**

The results were discussed with regards to the research questions leading to the final conclusion. In general, all teachers were impressed by the engaged learning approach and were eager to obtaining the ability of applying engaged learning approach for teaching the HE lesson. However, their opinions were differentiated regarding the influence of the new approach on their current teaching approaches. Therefore, the teachers presented different opinions regarding the students' participation and learning outcomes. Some challenges that teachers feared they might face when they used the engaged learning approaches during the HE lesson included the difficulties associated with applying new approaches in the classrooms, as well as, the students' ability to interact with new teaching process guaranteeing a creative learning environment. On the other hand, most students preferred using engaged learning during the HE lesson, and they stated

that the engaged learning activities such as the practical tasks they had in the current system had broken the boredom in the classroom. Some of students faced challenges in participation with their peers during the HE lesson, however all of them preferred knowledge-sharing with the classmates. Also, the results indicated that engaged learning permitted students to work with their authentic ideas and problems, assisted students to determine goals and evaluate their own learning, develop a deep understanding of ideas, offer time for in-depth work, sort through misconceptions, learn new ideas and create or improve upon ideas. Therefore, the participants' views suggested that the new approach could help developing students to think as professionals and permit students to experience a sense of deep intellectual and emotional investing in learning leading to encouraging students' sense of ownership and responsibility for their own learning.

***First Question: How does engaged learning approach influence the teacher's teaching approach, preparation, and delivery of the HE lessons?***

All teachers agreed that engaged learning could act as a reform in instruction, helping them and similar educators to chart a new instructional course based on a new vision and they discussed what it looked like in the classroom and community.

***Teacher 1*** explained that engaged learning motivated the students to share information and knowledge during the HE lesson, and this experience enhanced the teacher's teaching process. The feedback of the teacher was therefore, in agreement with the implementation of engaged learning in the classrooms.

***Teacher 2*** agreed that engaged learning was a beneficial teaching approach as she saw that students enjoyed and acted with interest and therefore benefited more when they shared information.

***Teacher 3*** argued that engaged learning approach would force the teacher to use untraditional way for teaching the HE lesson, and this way would be time consuming yet effective to the students. Also, the teacher highlighted that allowing students to work outside the classrooms was not suited to the current facilities, however, upon suitable modification the method might yield advantages to the

students' educational outcomes. She mentioned that in due course the strategy might help educators to chart an instructional course.

**Teacher 4** mentioned that engaged learning affected the teacher approach positively and that she found such activities interesting.

**Teacher 5** stated that the new teaching approach "engaged learning" could act as a "compass" for reform in Kuwaiti school instruction, helping educators to plan for a new curriculum and maintain an orientation based on a new vision of learning and what it looked like in the classroom and community. Also, the teacher believed that it was an enjoyable approach of teaching and that the students might feel the same.

**Teacher 6** agreed that engaged learning definitely introduced new approaches to the current teaching processes. The teacher as well agreed with teacher 5 totally in terms of the idea that the new teaching approach "engaged learning" was a smarter method than the traditional learning methods because it helped the students to get involved in solving real-practical examples.

**Second Question: How does engaged learning influence the student's motivation, class participation, learning strategies, and learning outcomes?**

Overall the results showed that engaged learning encouraged students to work with authentic ideas and problems, and assisted students to determine their learning goals. The results also indicated that the method could help students to evaluate their own learning, develop a deep understanding of ideas and offer time for in-depth work. It helped them to sort through misconceptions, learn new ideas and create or improve upon ideas, as well as, permitted students to experience a sense of deep intellectual and emotional investing in learning. The results also showed that the approach encouraged students' sense of ownership and responsibility for their own learning. In addition, engaged learning supported students with opportunities to develop abilities in intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, analyzing, reasoning, communicating, and problem solving.

**Student 1** agreed that when engaged learning approach was used by the teachers in the classrooms during HE lesson, it improved the

learning process and that was reflected positively on her educational attainments. The student highlighted that the engaged learning approach made learning enjoyable much more for HE lesson. In addition, the student agreed that, engaged learning gave a chance to get knowledge sharing from other resources.

*Student 2* agreed that using engaged learning she developed a deep understanding of ideas, it had offered time for in-depth work and had helped to sort through misconceptions. In addition, using engaged learning created new and interesting learning environment as the student highlighted it.

*Student 3* mentioned that the engaged learning permitted students to think as professionals and make professional quality outcomes, she saw it as an exciting new teaching approach and effective to both the teachers and students, where they cooperated together to make the learning process better and more productive. In addition, the student confirmed that engaged learning increased the learning outcomes for her HE lessons .

*Student 4* however did not agree on the idea of using engaged learning during HE lesson and the student stated that this method did not add any value to the students' educational outcomes. The student also stated that she believed the outcome was not enhanced using engaged learning and the student did not prefer using new teaching approach, because the current traditional ways were more beneficial and according to her there was no need to use different ways in the teaching, especially the approaches that enabled the students to work in groups.

*Student 5* preferred using engaged learning because it enabled the students to participate and share their knowledge during the HE lesson. The student confirmed that the outcome enhanced up to 80% than before. The student was motivated to search for more information connected to the HE lessons.

*Student 6* mentioned that engaged learning gave her the chance to improve her abilities in intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, analyzing, reasoning, communicating, and problem solving.

***Third Question: which education strategies are more beneficial for facilitating an engaged learning environment?***

Overall the results showed that the most powerful models of instruction are interactive. Results also indicated that this type of instruction actively engaged the learner, and was generative. Instruction encouraged the learner to construct and produce knowledge in meaningful ways. Students could teach others interactively and also interact very well with their teacher. This allowed for co-construction of knowledge, which promoted engaged learning that was problem-, project-, and goal-based. Some common strategies included in engaged learning models of instructions were individual and group summarizing, means of exploring multiple perspectives, techniques for building upon prior knowledge, brainstorming, Socratic dialogue, problem-solving processes, and team teaching. Flexibility and technological supports of the interactions implemented in computer environments are considered as a turning point for engaged learning approaches as the application of new technology.

***Teacher 1*** confirmed that the engaged learning and instruction encouraged the learners to construct and produce knowledge in meaningful ways. Students could teach others interactively and also interact with their teacher.

***Teacher 2*** did not prefer working outside the classroom "virtually", because in her opinion the students must be supervised and monitored to assure the success for the teaching process. On the other side, the teacher preferred dividing the students in to groups to better enable them sharing the knowledge.

***Teacher 3*** highlighted that flexibility and technological supports of the interactions implemented in computer environments were considered as a turning point for engaged learning approaches as she always preferred the application of new technology and found that was interesting for the students.

***Teacher 4*** mentioned that in some cases, engaged learning approaches were effective such as giving practical tasks to the students to practise and use their own knowledge. Where as in other cases, engaged learning was not beneficial such as working outside the

classrooms. However, she claimed that as students could get opportunities to share and learn, it reduced the extra load of teachers preparing for traditional teacher centred lessons and that the students' learning outcomes could be enhanced to 65% compared to using teacher centred instruction alone.

*Teacher 5* claimed that she had read that the most powerful reproductions of instruction were interactive and that this method of instruction actively engaged the learner, and was procreative.

*Teacher 6* agreed that a best approach was to involve the students in real-practical activities, under the teacher's guidance and control.

***Fourth Question: What strengths and limitations do teachers and students experience in engaged learning environments?***

The results indicated many strengths of the engaged learning such as its capacity to enrich the learning context so that students were able to develop their understanding and skills and become competent to face new and rapidly appearing situations. In addition, while enriching their own learning context the strategy also enabled students to widen up their interaction and communication through ongoing dialogues with other students' learning contexts. The main limitation, however, as pointed out by most teachers was the additional time for taking the lesson. According to teachers it became difficult to implement the complete form of planned lesson while applying the engaged learning approach. Teachers in general described being unable to plan for and implement the lesson with their current capacity and indicated they had to be very careful in that engaged learning needed more control efforts from teachers.

*Teacher 1* confirmed that exercising more control on students when applying the engaged learning approach became an added and very difficult responsibility.

*Teacher 2* indicated that the students needed to be constantly supervised and monitored to assure the success of the teaching process and that there was insufficient time available to apply this approach during a single lesson.

*Teacher 3* pointed out that limitations on time and the requirement of additional resources forced her to use an untraditional way of pedagogy.

*Teacher 4* stated that the major strength of the engaged learning approach was that it was very effective as the opportunity enabled students to practice and use their own knowledge.

*Teacher 5* stated that engaged learning was a smarter way of learning as it depended on using real-practical examples. Moreover, the teacher realized that the main limitation was that the method required including more efforts from the teacher to control the students' works.

*Teacher 6* considered that the strategy's major strength was in involving the students in real-practical examples.

Students also considered the use of engaged learning as a strength, it enabled them to modify and adjust their learning and provided them with the opportunity to engage in real life practical activities. The students' thoughts were not different from the teachers', however, some students faced challenges regarding active participation in the lesson.

*Student 1* agreed that, the engaged learning gave a chance to get knowledge-based sharing that also included others' resources. Nevertheless, it was indicated that the sharing of knowledge had resulted in some conflicts between the students or between the students and the teacher.

*Student 2* claimed that using engaged learning had created a new learning environment as the student highlighted it, however, the student preferred to apply it under the supervision of teachers.

*Student 3* confirmed that engaged learning had helped her to increase the learning outcomes in HE lessons.

*Student 4* considered that this method was not a beneficial way mainly because when the students were divided into groups, some of them had to struggle due to increased conflicts and wasted efforts.

*Student 5* said that the main limitation of engaged learning method was that it might result in some conflicts due to different points of views, however, the student emphasised that its main strength was

that the students had enjoyed the learning atmosphere while experiencing group activities that involved sharing of ideas.

*Student 6* also confirmed that using engaged learning during the HE lesson had influenced her learning outcomes positively as evidenced by teacher feedbacks and assessments in the class when they conducted practical tasks in the classroom.

### **Discussion**

This research was conducted in six Kuwaiti schools in the Kuwait City district (The Capital of Kuwait), to evaluate the influence of the engaged learning approach on the teachers' HE teaching process and student learning outcomes. The study described in this paper has been premised upon the assumption that engaged learning could improve teaching and learning outcomes in HE within the context of Kuwaiti education. The researcher as an educator in Home Economics and also as a researcher, was interested in how teachers' and students' agency had reacted to implementing an engaged learning approach which was new to Kuwaiti education. Teacher and student perceptions are relevant when educators plan for and develop new strategies at national level. Even though in the current research the focus is on engaged learning in Home Economics the researcher contends that the findings of the research hold value for other disciplines in Kuwaiti education.

The first research question analysed participants' perspectives on the influence of engaged learning on the teacher's teaching approach, preparation, and delivery of the HE lessons. The results of this study was in agreement with Warriner's (2010) study which emphasised the importance of engaged learning in enhancing the teaching process, and the results showed that engaged learning had motivated the teachers to improve their teaching approaches. Biggs (1990) suggested that there were three outcomes of engagement in learning which were an increase in students' knowledge base, an improvement in motivation to learn, and an increase in active learning being better than passive learning. Francis & Shannon's (2013) study also found that the engaged learning method had positively affected the teaching process, teachers' teaching approaches and skills, as well as teachers' satisfaction of the assessment. Fetherston, (2006) documented an outcomes approach that

was deeply focused on empowering students to produce the best outcomes after they were engaged with the learning tasks. As such, it is important to consider that outcomes in learning process is relevant than what is to be taught. The results of the interviews supported the first research question of the study where it was showed that teachers also were enthusiastic to the idea of using engaged learning and viewed it as a tool to enhance the students' outcomes. Moreover, most teachers agreed that the engaged learning was a beneficial experiment for them, and they were motivated to prepare and use different approaches of HE lesson. It became apparent during the research that teachers were becoming increasingly aware of how students enjoyed sharing information while learning and the need to incorporate similar novel strategies in education adopted worldwide that focused on student interest in learning leading to better learning. For example, in response to the first research question teachers mentioned that engaged learning could act as a "compass" for reform in instruction, helping educators to chart an instructional course and maintain an orientation based on a vision of engaged learning and what it looked like in the classroom and community.

The second research question focused on the influence of engaged learning on student's motivation, class participation, learning strategies, and learning outcomes. Meaningful learning has a precursor, which is, motivation. According to Alexander & Murphy (1998) there are five essential dimensions of meaningful learning: "a) The knowledge base, b) Strategic processing or executive control, c) Motivation and affect, d) Development and individual differences, and e) Situation or context" (p.28). The findings from interviews showed that students were motivated to learn more things when they received engaged learning. The results of the present study were also in agreement with Francis & Shannon's (2013) study, which found that the engaged learning method had positively affected the teaching process, by maintaining students' motivation, teachers' teaching approaches and skills, as well as teachers' satisfaction of the assessment. Students in the present study claimed that they found engaged learning as a method that promoted motivation. According to them it created a new and interesting learning

environment as the student highlighted. It is important to note that an environment that is favourable to learning is very critical in engaging students. This is evident in the Views of most educators. For example, it has been quoted that an environment “where instruction is challenging, students feel comfortable asking questions, and students are expected to do their best” (www.centerforcsri.org newsletter, April 2007, p. 2) is an ideal one for learning to take place.

Moreover, the results of the study support the second research question as the teachers see that the best strategy for applying engaged learning is through distributing the students into groups and working together inside the classroom and under the supervision of teachers so that it maximised student participation. Also, the most powerful models of instruction are interactive as evidenced by Vale, Weaven, Davies, & Hooley (2010) who documented that when learning becomes student-centred, teaching is only an informed response to students’ needs, abilities, interests, and learning styles, with the teacher as the facilitator of the learning tasks. Engaged instruction actively engages the learner, and is generative. Instruction therefore encourages the learner to construct and produce knowledge in meaningful ways. Students teach others interactively and interact generatively with their teacher and peers. This allows for co-construction of knowledge in sociopersonal context , which promotes engaged learning that is problem-, project-, and goal-based. These results agreed with the results of Madden (2010) who studied the impact of the engaged learning on the students' learning outcomes, which revealed that the students preferred discussion techniques as approach of engaged learning. In addition, it can be argued that as students are engaged and interact well during the lesson, it enhanced their capacity to assimilate prior knowledge with the new knowledge they obtained and modified their traditional learning approaches. Skinner’s theory identifies that student-focused learning activities have more benefit in producing positive responses by the students compared to traditional teacher-centred approaches (Gredler, 2009).

Most of the social constructivist theories highlight that transformation of student understanding is strongly promoted by social interaction.

However, deep understanding and meaningful learning are inseparable aspects of interaction in classrooms. Jonassen et. al. (2003, p.8) argued that meaningful learning is “active, constructive, intentional, authentic, and cooperative”. In addition, the results agreed with Alrushiedat & Olfman (2013) which showed that the engaged learning facilitated students' participations in the blended learning environment and provided useful insights for enhancing the students' interaction and aiding learning. Also, the results agreed with the results of Zheng et. al. (2014) which stated that engaged learning enhanced the students' participation in collaborative learning, and enhanced the teachers' teaching approach. It could be linked to the self-authorship and judgment of learners in engaged classrooms that help them to critically evaluate the learned content while effectively collaborating with other learners (Hodge et. al., 2009). Further, this research is in agreement with the constructivist idea that learning process is inseparable from the interaction of students with their environment including involvement with their peer (Schunk, 2008; Siegler & Ellis, 1996).

Investigating the third research question, it was identified that teachers who participated in this study were aware that as Klem & Connell commented (2004, p.1) “engagement is important for learning and achieving success in school”. As such this study provided some insights into the strengths of engaged learning and suggest that the method could deal with the usual challenges that most teachers face within their classrooms such as lack of student motivation and lack of engagement that blocked meaningful learning. Teacher 1 had believed that engaged learning and instruction had the power to orient learners towards constructing and producing knowledge in meaningful ways. Yet another teacher preferred dividing the students in to groups to enable them to share and learn. It is well known that while social interaction is necessary for learning, the interaction also lead to constructivism and creating new knowledge from experiences. Teachers also highlighted that, for example, technologically supported interactive environments were interesting to the students.

According to Jones, Valdez, Nowakowski & Rasmussen (1994) engaged learning only happen in knowledge-building learning

communities and such communities not only share information but also value multiple perspectives. This is in agreement with the response of Teacher 4 who mentioned that practical tasks were beneficial to students to practise and use their own knowledge and the students' learning outcomes could be enhanced to 65% compared to using teacher centred instruction alone. Teacher 5 claimed that she had read that the most powerful reproductions of instruction were interactive and that this method of instruction actively engaged the learner, and was procreative.

Finally, the responses of both teachers and students about the strengths and limitations of engaged learning approach supports the fourth research question, where the teachers' point of view towards the engaged learning could be translated into the main strength of the engaged learning approach, which is accelerating the teaching practices and learning. In addition, while it might enhance the motivation of students to learn, its main limitation is the inability to control the negotiations sometimes, especially with the differences of point of views outside the classrooms, whereas students' views about the main limitation was the possibility of conflicts occurring inside the classroom especially when grouping the students.

This result agreed with what was revealed by Hou (2014), who studied the effects of engaged learning on the students' learning outcomes in classrooms and the results showed that the students expressed that engaged learning was a very powerful educational teaching strategy but it required well-management to avoid the conflicts that occurred when the students were grouped. Griffey & Housner (1991) study also revealed that as instruction became orderly and well planned, it prevented off-task behaviours. Overall this study allowed both the teachers and students to assert their unique personal perspectives and interests related to the learning contexts of HE. These findings also corroborated the essence of social cognitive theories that underpin learning and student behaviour and highlight that learning environment is an inseparable factor in the learning process.

This research paper contributes to educational theory and practice. The research paper also significantly contributes to the practices of

teaching in Kuwait in general and in Home Economics in particular. As the teachers introduced agreement to apply engaged learning concept in the classroom teaching and learning of HE this also indicated that the teachers could be motivated to apply engaged learning approaches in different lessons. The paper's results and recommendations could contribute to encouraging the use of engaged learning as well as support theoretical aspects and enhance current teaching process. The study would also improve educational visions leading to incorporating such methods aiming at quality of learning of Kuwaiti school students. In addition, the paper attracts educators to invest in new teaching strategies that motivate the students to participate in the learning process and share their knowledge. For example, the study contributes in drawing the attention of Kuwaiti education institutions and decision makers to the importance of engaged learning approach on improving the teachers' approaches, strategies and preparation as well as on students' learning outcomes and motivations. However, the findings of the research paper additionally shed the light on a number of challenges that might be faced by the Kuwaiti education system in applying this teaching approach.

### Challenges of the Study

Many and challenges were raised during this research study. The main challenge faced by the researcher was the scarcity of previous resources and studies in Kuwait that were related to the influence of engaged learning on teaching approaches and students' learning outcomes. While these results provide a solid framework for understanding the scope of engaged learning in HE, additional research is needed to gain more understanding related to the specific components such as curriculum, resources, policies and so on. Considerable attention should be given to class sizes, teacher professional development and educational facilities to implement such interactive learning strategies. Also, the responses of the teachers and students on the interviews questions were not detailed enough to get deeper results. Some students had not enough ideas about the engaged learning and the shared learning other than the normal practical tasks that they were used to in their HE classes. Moreover, the researcher had faced difficulties to get the approval to make the interviews.

While the results of this study provide an introductory framework for understanding teachers' and students' experiences related to engaged learning, additional research is needed to better understand the many factors that could strengthen the implementation of such strategies in HE. The findings of this paper have therefore highlighted the necessity to study the influence of engaged learning and the many associated factors on Kuwaiti education. For example, differences related to topics, class size, teacher skill and professional development might be studied for further improvement in using the approach. It is also possible, to study the effect of the strategy on each factor separately for more detailed results. Also, it is possible to use the present findings to evaluate engaged learning and its effect on tertiary students and educators. Overall, this study draws a roadmap for the researchers to use a larger and varied sample to measure the impacts of engaged learning on pedagogical approaches as well as students' learning outcomes.

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