Internationalisation of higher education in the UAE and the implications for undergraduate student’s institutional choice for postgraduate studies

Solomon Arulraj David
The British University in Dubai, UAE
solomon.david@buid.ac.ae

ISANA 2016
Wellington, New Zealand
07-12-2016
Purpose of the study

• To explore the implications of internationalisation of higher education in the UAE
• To understand the dynamics of internationalisation on higher education institutional choice.
• To map out the impacts of internationalisation on UG students institutional choice for PG studies
• Key assumption: there might be more attraction for international university programmes among students in the UAE, particularly for the PG studies, which may pose potential challenges for other universities to attract students for PG programmes
Theoretical claims – the dynamics

- Altbach & Knight (2007) foresee that internationalism will remain a central force in higher education although its contours are unclear.

- Knight (2012) conceptualises internationalisation of higher education broadly, which includes internationalisation at home and at abroad, internationalisation of curriculum, use of English as global academic language, use of intercultural, comparative perspectives in teaching and learning process, programme and content, mobility of programme, physical campus, persons (student, staff).

- De Wit & Hunter (2015) indicate that universities have always had some international dimension, either in the concept of universal knowledge and related research, or in the movement of students and scholars.
Theoretical claims – regional development

• Donn & Al Manthri (2010) indicates the importance of globalisation for higher education in the Arab Gulf States.

• Herrera (2011) traces the legacies of higher learning institutions ‘the madrasa’ to the seventh century and she accounts growth and expansion of higher education through nationalisation, internationalisation, privatisation dynamics along with pan-Arab cooperation in higher education.

• Wan, Ahmad & Lai (2016) indicates strong internationalisation dynamics particularly the post-colonial and post-independence higher education in the Arab / MENA region is strongly foreign-driven and investment-intensive, especially in the Arab region.

• According to UIS (2016), the share of mobile students studying within Arab / MENA region increased from 12% to 30% between 1999 and 2013.
Theoretical claims – UAE development

• Kirk & Napier (2009) accounts that the expansion, modernisation and transformation of higher education in the UAE aims to serve the nation’s needs, as well as to bring it into the global arena.

• Madichie & Kola (2013) observe that franchising and direct investment are the two dominant approaches to internationalisation of higher education in the UAE and interest for foreign curriculum among local institutions.

• Wilkins & Balakrishnan (2013) found that levels of student satisfaction at UAE branch campuses were generally high, given quality of lecturers, quality and availability of resources, and effective use of technology.

• The expat students come from 160 countries, of which 18 are GCC and Arab countries, 41 European, 38 non-Arab, 32 non-Arab Asian, 25 Latin American and Caribbean, 4 Oceanic, 2 North American countries (UAE Higher Education Fact Book, 2014)
UAE political and economical context

• Although UAE has diversified its economy, four sectors account 66% of the UAE economy (oil 33%, real estate 12, construction 9%, trade 12%) (ENBD, 2013)

• The seven emirates in the UAE: Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Sharjah, Ras Al Khaimah, Um Al Quain. Abu Dhabi and Dubai the largest emirates in terms of economy and demography as well as higher education market.

• The local population is about 12% expats make 88% (Indian 28%, Pakistan 13%, Bangladesh 8%, Philippines 6%)

• The first university UAEU was founded in 1974. There are 3 federal institution (HCTs, 17 campuses), 75 licensed higher education institutions (888 accredited programmes)

• Education in UAE is expected to rise 4% annually given the increase in private institution, with 9% increase in the enrollment at tertiary level (Khamis, 2016)
Licensed programmes in the UAE

• In 2013-2014, higher education institutions in the UAE offered 808 accredited programmes; including 492 bachelors, 204 masters and 16 doctoral programmes (MHESR, 2014, p.15)

• About 45389 students are enrolled in the federal institution and 82894 students are enrolled in the non-federal institutions (p.44)

• Nearly 40% of the students are enrolled in institutions in Abu Dhabi and about 27% in Dubai

• 70% of students in federal tertiary institutions in the UAE are women, while the enrolment in all the institutions account 57% female students (p.45)

• 3200 students from the UAE studied at university level programmes in the UK during 2013
Licensed institutions in the UAE

• According to UIS (2016), Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE hosted 4% of the global share of mobile students. Saudi Arabia and the UAE now outplace the UK in attracting students from the Arab States and both have become the third most popular destination (followed by France and USA) for students from the region

• Wilkins (2010) identifies the UAE as establishing the largest hub of international branch campuses, having over 40 providers at the end of 2009

• According to the national (2016) the ministry of higher education and scientific research in the UAE has released a list of 105 accredited foreign online universities recommended for UAE students of those universities, 46 are in the UK, 34 in the USA, 20 in Australia, and five in New Zealand
Methodology

• Document analysis and literature review
  • Higher education reports – MHRD, UAE
  • Documents from national qualification authority, UAE
  • Documents from higher education accreditation, UAE

• Survey
  • 205 undergraduate students took online survey – 160 completed quantitative section, 40 completed qualitative section
  • Online survey questionnaire – 20 questions
  • Questions inquiring about UG students’ institutional choice for their PG courses
    • Are you planning to pursue PG course?
    • Factors influencing the institutional choices both at UG and PG
    • Factors influencing the preferred institution types
## Demographic of the participants

Demographic of the 160 participants completed the quantitative part

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demography</th>
<th>Numbers - 160</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE nationals</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expats</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Demographic of the 40 participants completed the qualitative part

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demography</th>
<th>Numbers - 40</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE nationals</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expats</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When do you plan to pursue postgraduate study?

- On completion of undergraduate study: 28%
- After some work experience: 46%
- No plan for a postgraduate study yet: 14%
- Will not go for a postgraduate study ever: 12%
### Top five desired destinations for PG study abroad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; choice</th>
<th>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; choice</th>
<th>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; choice</th>
<th>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; choice</th>
<th>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE nationals</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expats</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Inbound and outbound students in the UAE (UIS, 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inbound</td>
<td>India 9273</td>
<td>Syria 5432</td>
<td>Oman 5370</td>
<td>Jordan 5255</td>
<td>Palestine 4126</td>
<td>54162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outbound</td>
<td>UK 3025</td>
<td>USA 2159</td>
<td>Australia 980</td>
<td>India 805</td>
<td>Oman 479</td>
<td>8526</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Which institution in the UAE you prefer for your PG study?

- Federal public institution: 32 Male, 14 Female, 10 UAE nationals, 8 Expats
- Non-federal public institution: 28 Male, 16 Female, 10 UAE nationals, 6 Expats
- Private institution with foreign curriculum: 26 Male, 22 Female, 18 UAE nationals, 4 Expats
- Foreign university operating in the UAE: 30 Male, 30 Female, 26 UAE nationals, 10 Expats
- No preference / don't know / others: 36 Male, 22 Female, 22 UAE nationals, 10 Expats
In which Emirate do you like to carry out your postgraduate study?

- Abu Dhabi: 28%
- Ajman: 4%
- Dubai: 34%
- Fujairah: 4%
- Ras al-Khaimah: 12%
- Sharjah: 18%
- Umm al-Quwain: 0%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key factors influencing institutional choice</th>
<th>Federal public institution</th>
<th>Non-federal public institution</th>
<th>Private institution with international curriculum</th>
<th>Foreign university operating in UAE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International academics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International curriculum</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International affiliation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional accreditation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning resources</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support facilities</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career guidance and placement support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top ranked</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordable fees</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible location</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry experience, internship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global opportunity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional reputation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarship</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Findings

- The results of the study indicate mixed interests of undergraduate students for choosing the institution for their future studies, with significant interest to choose foreign universities operating in the UAE and universities offering foreign curriculum for postgraduate studies.

- Some of the reasons the participants indicated to prefer foreign universities or universities offering foreign curriculum include; international faculty members, foreign curriculum, international affiliation, international degree, joint degree, diversity, ranking and global opportunities.

- It is observed that there is some difference between male and female, among UAE nationals and expats in their preferred institution for their PG study.

- The quality of domestic public institutions has been constantly raised, it costs less for local students to attend public institutions – these and other factors make the local institutions equally attractive yet not much for PG studies.
Challenges and opportunities

• The study observes potential challenges for federal and non-federal public institutions to attract postgraduate students, particularly the expat students.

• While the relatively comparable quality in the federal and non-federal public institutions seem to be equally attractive place, largely for the UAE nationals.

• The study also indicates, the emergence of foreign and private higher educational institution in the UAE brings possible competition to enhance quality of higher education.

• The current study has indicated the general trends on the impacts of internationalisation of higher education for undergraduate student’s institutional choice for postgraduate studies in the UAE, if expanded with bigger sample size and additional data source it would strengthen.
Key References – theoretical


Key References – contextual


Questions?

• How international branch campuses are (quality, facility)?
• Is there a relationship between colonial legacies and internationalisation (desire to follow the colonial master)?
• Internationalisation – serving at home (for wealthy students), serving abroad (at wealthy nations) – isn’t this a commercial model than cooperation?
• How long newer, smaller nations will take to build their knowledge basis?
• Would the emergence of regional knowledge hubs pose any challenges to the traditional players in internationalisation?
• Isn’t a 45 years nation (UAE) trying to do the best in education / higher education?
• Any other?

• Thank you