

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

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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 outpace 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

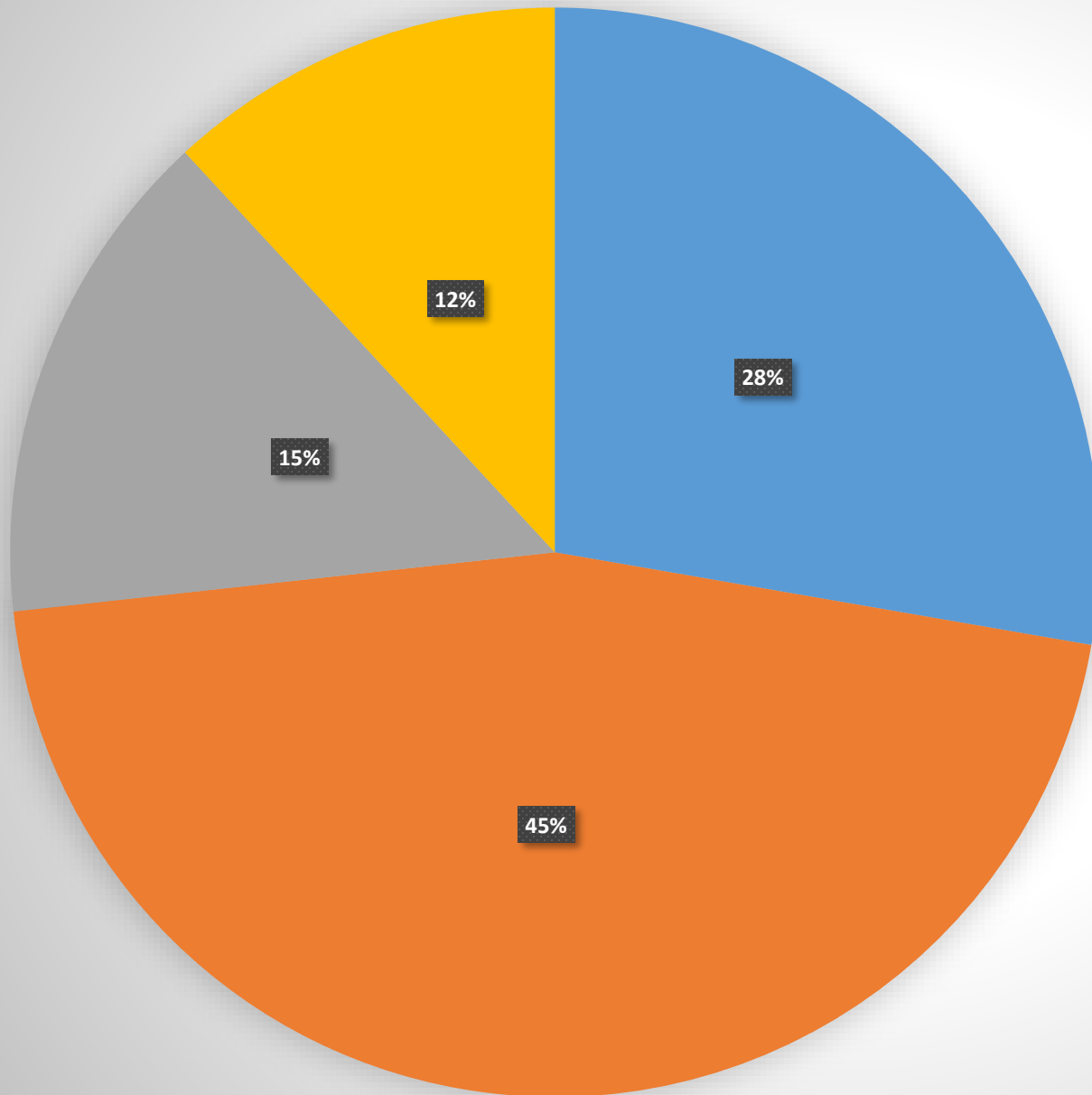
Demographic of the 160 participants completed the quantitative part

Demography	Numbers - 160
Male	76
Female	84
UAE nationals	72
Expats	88

Demographic of the 40 participants completed the qualitative part

Demography	Numbers - 40
Male	15
Female	25
UAE nationals	17
Expats	23

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%

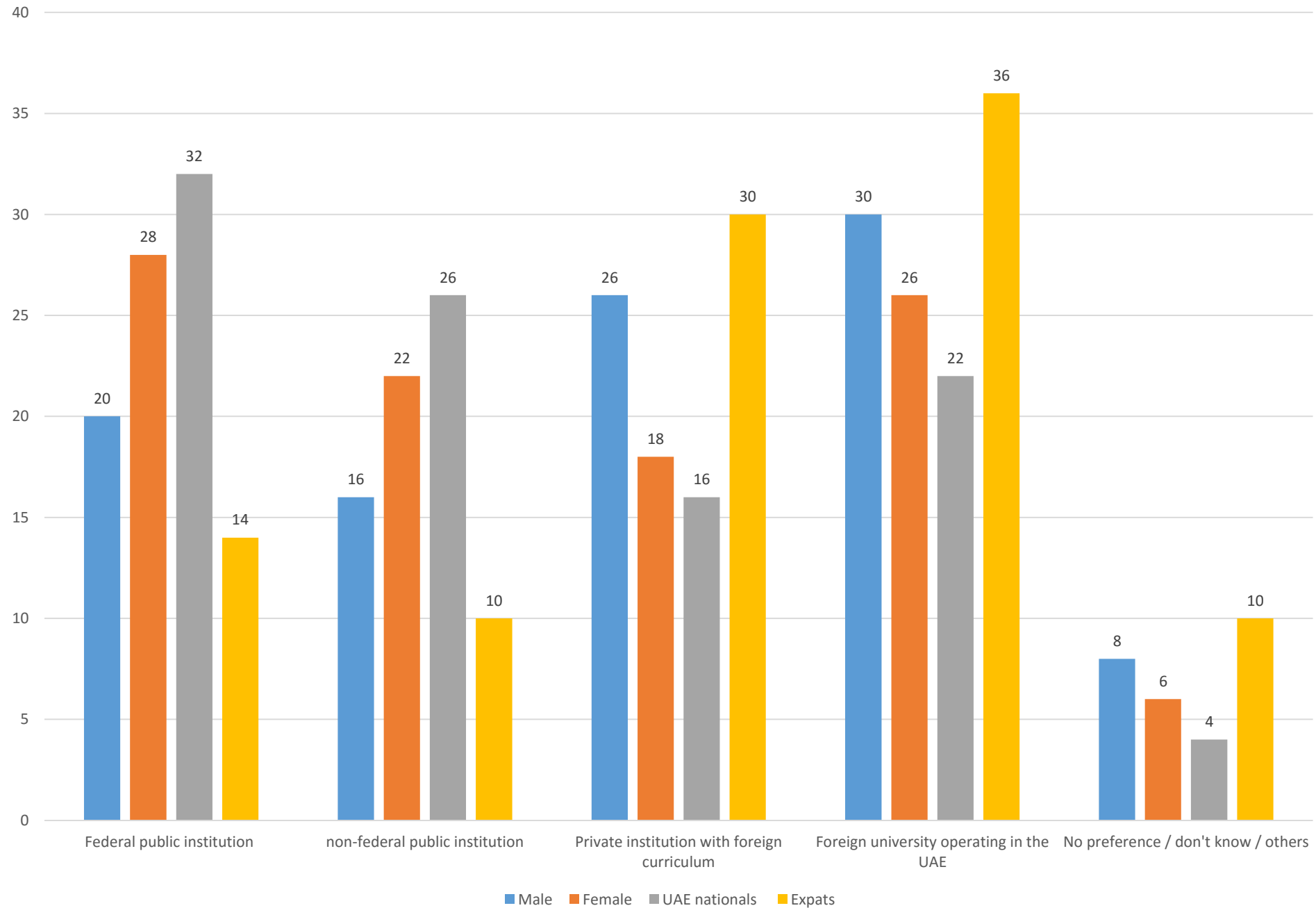
Top five desired destinations for PG study abroad

	1 st choice	2 nd choice	3 rd choice	4 th choice	5 th choice
Male	UK	USA	Australia	Canada	France
Female	USA	UK	Canada	Australia	Germany
UAE nationals	USA	UK	Canada	Australia	Malaysia
Expats	UK	USA	Canada	Australia	India

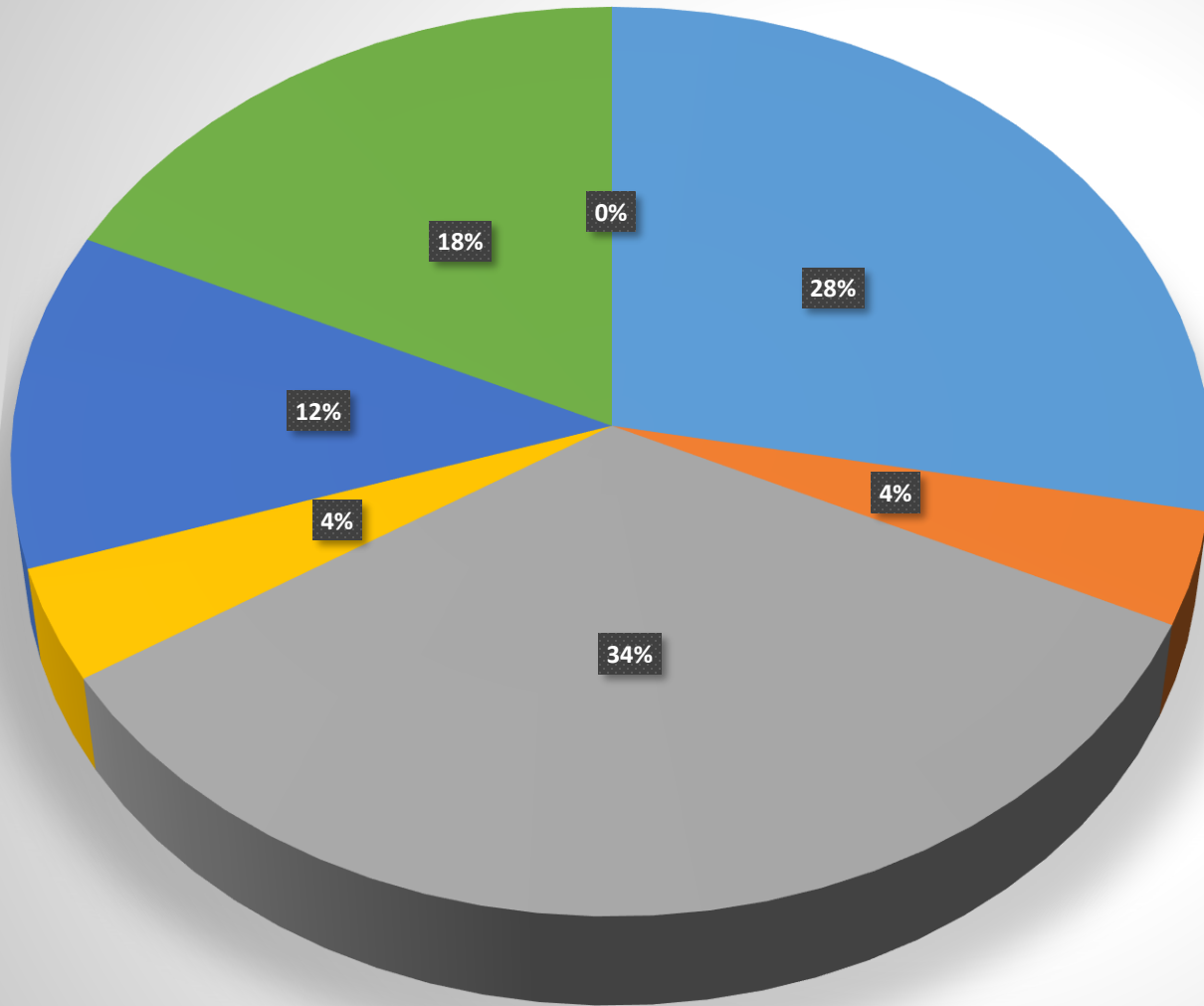
Inbound and outbound students in the UAE (UIS, 2016)

	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	Total
Inbound	India 9273	Syria 5432	Oman 5370	Jordan 5255	Palestine 4126	54162
Outbound	UK 3025	USA 2159	Australia 980	India 805	Oman 479	8526

Which institution in the UAE you prefer for your PG study?



In which Emirate, 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%

Key factors influencing institutional choice

	Federal public institution	Non-federal public institution	Private institution with international curriculum	Foreign university operating in UAE
International academics			X	X
International curriculum			X	X
International affiliation			X	X
Institutional accreditation	X	X		
Learning resources	X	X		X
Support facilities	X	X		
Career guidance and placement support			X	
Top ranked	X			X
Affordable fees	X	X		
Accessible location		X		
Industry experience, internship			X	X
Global opportunity			X	X
Diversity			X	X
Institutional reputation	X			X
Scholarship	X	X		

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

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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