

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

Solomon Arulraj David<sup>1</sup>

The British University in Dubai, UAE

## **Abstract**

Higher education in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has expanded particularly shaped by internationalisation dynamics, during last two decades. The higher education sector in the UAE includes federal / regional government, domestic private and foreign institutions in the UAE. This study aims to explore the implications of internationalisation of higher education for students' institutional choice in the UAE. Quantitative data was gathered through a questionnaire from 160 students who are currently enrolled in undergraduate programme in higher educational institutions in the UAE and qualitative data was gathered from 40 students. The results of the study indicate mixed interests of undergraduate students for choosing the institution for their current and 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 degree, joint degree and global opportunities. The study observes potential challenges for federal and non-federal public institutions to attract postgraduate students, particularly the expat students. While 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.

**Keywords:** internationalisation, higher education, institutional choice, postgraduate studies, UAE

---

<sup>1</sup> Dr Solomon Arulraj David is an assistant professor of education at the faculty of education, The British University in Dubai, UAE. He is also a visiting fellow at University of Glasgow, UK and a visiting research associate at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa. The views expressed in this article do not reflect the institutions the author is associated.