

# Globalization impact on higher education in the uae education essay

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GLOBALIZATION impact on HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UAE The term Globalization was created by Reiser and Davies in 1944 to refer to the process of integrating societies by removing geographical, legal, and political constraints. It is one of the important issues that have attracted global attention of academicians, researchers, businessmen, policy makers, politicians, social workers, etc., in the recent times. Globalization has great relevance in the context of Higher Education. It is especially important in the modern technologically advanced world where progress of individuals greatly depends upon the level of specialized knowledge and skills they have. Although education is a basic human right, societies around the world are not uniform in terms of providing educational facilities to impart the required knowledge and skills to its members. Globalization of Higher Education is answer to this constraint to a large extent. The fundamental objective of globalization of Higher Education is to help rapid and more extensive diffusion of technology, knowledge and ideas across societies. It helps disseminating advances in education, and technology to cross boarder societies and makes members of societies skillful and competent to meet the growing demands of labor market. It also contributes to establish global standards for maintaining quality education. Yet, it faces many challenges. Globalization in the UAE has mixed impacts. While it helps improving quality of education and creating a knowledge society for a knowledge economy, it may have adverse effects on social and cultural landscape. Over the past two decades, higher education systems around the world have witnessed a rapid change. Many students nowadays seek overseas education in order to be well prepared for the global market. Studying overseas has become a new

trend; nearly three million students worldwide now study outside their home countries, a 57% increase in just the past decade. The number of branch campuses has also grown dramatically, with more than 160 around the world. Countries around the world are becoming aware of the economic benefits of educational institutions and are working hard to improve their enrollment. One research estimates that the number of globally mobile students will nearly triple to eight million by 2025. The research includes that India and China will continue to be the world's leading exporters of students, although China has started to import students from other Asian countries. International research collaborations amongst universities are another growing trend, and have almost doubled in the past two decades. Such international collaborative work in education ensures that academic progress in one part of the world could mean advancements and growth in another part of the world. Allowing people and knowledge to freely move beyond campus walls is constructive to all parties involved.

## **Education Structure in the UAE**

The higher education system in the United Arab Emirates has undergone substantial change since the establishment of the country almost 40 years ago. As a country, the UAE was established in 1971 through a union between the rulers of the seven emirates, with Abu Dhabi being the capital city. While Dubai's economy is mainly generated through tourism and the financial sector, Abu Dhabi's economy relies largely on its oil revenues. In 2007 Abu Dhabi contributed nearly 56% of the GDP, while Dubai contributed just over 30%, and the remaining 24% was contributed from the other five Emirates. At the time of the country's establishment in 1971, a total of 74 schools

existed throughout the seven Emirates, and those who choose to pursue a higher education had to travel overseas. In 1977 the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) was established as the first university in the UAE, followed by Higher Colleges of Technology in 1988, which was initially a vocational school but today offers both graduate and postgraduate degrees across 17 campuses. Zayed University was the third university that was founded by the federal government in 1998. Today, Zayed University has expanded its campuses within Abu Dhabi and Dubai and is planning to open a state-of-the-art flagship campus in September 2011. According to Zayed University's provost Dr. Daniel Johnson, the university forecasts that their enrollment would increase from the current 4, 820 to 9, 000 in 2014, reflecting an intense increase in the number of Emiratis reaching university age. Article 23 of the constitution of the UAE recognizes the important role of education in the development of the nation, and therefore guarantees free education to all Emiratis at all levels. Hence, all Emirati students who graduate from high school are entitled to attend one of the three federal higher education institutions. Aside from the federal higher education institutions, a large number of higher education institutions exist in the UAE. Private universities in the UAE are either owned locally or they are extensions of foreign institutions, hence are managed by foreign institutions. Some of the private and locally owned institutions include the American University of Sharjah, which was established in 1997 by the ruler of Sharjah. In 1997 the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry established the Dubai University, and in 2006 the Abu Dhabi Education Council established Paris-Sorbonne University, which is locally managed. Nearly 40 years after the establishment of the

United Arab Emirates, the country is moving towards becoming a competitor to countries such as China, Singapore, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia who have each invested considerably in establishing top-tier research universities. The efforts of the UAE in investing in its higher education system will most likely continue given its wealth. According to the UAE Ministry of Higher Education, there are currently 70 higher education institutions licensed in the UAE, majority of which are international branch campuses, such as Herriot Watt University, University of Wollongong, Middlesex University, University of Pune, and New York University, Abu Dhabi. What remain to be seen are the long-term academic and economic results of these institutions. Some critics have suggested that the number of colleges and universities in the UAE exceeds the current demand. According to Lewin (2008), nearly two-thirds of the private institutions in the UAE were established after 2005. The speed at which universities have been established in the UAE has been referred to as " Educational Gold Rush". Initially these foreign institutions were established to cater to the Emirati students, and the children of the expatriate community who do not want to leave the UAE and cannot study in the government-financed universities, because they are only reserved for Emirati students. International branch campuses in the UAE do not all share the same motives; while some establish campuses for a quick way of generating revenues, others do so to enhance research and knowledge collaboration.

## **Benefits Globalizing Higher Education in the UAE**

Globalization of Higher Education has several positive effects in the UAE

Along with the other features of globalization. Stating below are some of the noticeable benefits on the Higher Education:

### **Improving Content and Delivery of Programs**

Improving content and delivery of education is an important benefit that UAE Education system derives from globalization. The UAE government

recognizes that it is important to have internationally competent workforce.

The earlier strategy to this effect was to encourage Emirati students go

abroad to pursue university education with federal support. The other

measure was developing internationally comparable curriculum, contents,

and delivery system that help students to develop international and

intercultural skills without travelling abroad. The federal universities have

also collaborated with the different European/U. S./Australian universities for

short-term exchange programs for Emirati students. The private universities

and the campuses of foreign universities in the country are also committed

to develop internationally competent graduates. While the campuses of

foreign universities such as Sorbonne University, the University of

Wollongong, Exeter University, and the British University, the Middlesex

University, New York University, etc., follow their same curriculum and

teaching methods on their UAE campuses, several other private local

universities have adopted an infusion approach. In which they tried to

provide a global and international flavor to the Education by infusing global

curriculum at all levels. The infusion approach that is considered to be an

effective way to help students develop international and intercultural skills

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without leaving the country is being practiced effectively in the UAE. The American University of Sharjah, American University of Dubai, American College in Dubai, American University of Ras Al Khaimah, American University in the Emirates, the Canadian University of Dubai, etc., are good examples of the universities adopted infusion approach.

## **Collaboration and Capacity Building**

Globalization of Higher Education helps enhancing academic exchanges and cooperation between cross-national universities. Both the federal and private universities in the UAE have collaborated with several foreign tertiary educational institutions and derive great benefits. All federal schools in the country have different types of collaboration especially with the different western universities. This arrangement is found to be extremely helpful for the federal institutions to enhance quality, share innovations, and introduce innovative technology and methods. For instance, the HCT is seeking institutional accreditation with the North West Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), USA. Similarly, various HCT programs are accredited by the different Canadian, US, UK, and Australian universities/institutions. The HCT students are also getting short-term scholarships and visiting opportunities from the HCT-collaborated tertiary educational institutions abroad and are able to enrich their university experience. These arrangements help the tertiary educational institutions to maintain and enhance quality and improve international competence of students. Capacity building, another important contribution of globalization of Higher Education, is found to be highly relevant in the UAE. Innovative research institutions play a decisive role in the sustainable development of the country.

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Globalization of Higher Education enables the country's tertiary educational institutions to enhance their technical capability. It also helps establishing innovative research centers and enhancing skills of researchers for sustainable development. The Masdar Institute in Abu Dhabi, established in 2006, aims at developing innovative methods to produce clean and renewable energy. Its association with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) enables it to receive enormous technical support to accomplish its goals. The institute also receives support from the MIT to develop graduate level research centre that focus on renewable energy technologies. Further, the Masdar scientists attend the MIT courses in Boston and are being technically supported to develop research and courses at Abu Dhabi. This arrangement helps the country significantly to accomplish its objective of producing renewable energy.

## **Potential Adverse effects of Globalizing Higher Education in the UAE**

Globalization of Higher Education indeed has several benefits, yet its adverse effects cannot be overlooked.

### **Too Many Providers and Poor Quality**

It is apparent that the pace of growth of Higher Education in the UAE is not realistic. The unrealistic and ambitious expansion of Higher Education has led to an explosion of Higher Education Institutions in the country. It is reported that there are around 500 Higher Education Institutions in the Higher Education free-zones in Dubai alone, 29 in the International Academic City and over 450 in the Dubai Knowledge Village. It is to be noted that this is the situation of the Higher Education free-zone alone. There are several <https://assignbuster.com/globalization-impact-on-higher-education-in-the-uae-education-essay/>



other Higher Education Institutions operate elsewhere in the country. It appears that UAE being a small country with a population of only 4.5 million has a large number of tertiary educational institutions. The far too many institutions in the country are making the Higher Education landscape an overcrowded marketplace. Competition for students is extremely high in the country that has potential to decline quality. The quality of education and the degrees awarded by some of the foreign universities on their UAE campuses are matters of important concerns in the country. There are no strict regulations on quality and standards in place in the Higher Education free zones in the UAE. In the absence of such regulations, many foreign providers reportedly do not teach the courses in the same standard as of their home campuses. The degrees that students receive from the UAE campuses of foreign university are not the same caliber of those one normally expects at the home campus of the providers. Probably, too large number of institutions along with absence of quality regulations, forces the providers compromise on quality in order to sustain in the hypercompetitive Higher Education market. Many universities including some of the high-profiled universities could not survive in the hypercompetitive Higher Education market in the UAE and forced closure. The University of Southern Queensland in Dubai and George Mason University in Ras Al Khiamah are the two such instances of ill-fated universities. The University of Southern Queensland, Australia opened its Dubai campus in September 2004. Dubai Knowledge Village and had to close down in 2005 primarily due to its inability to sustain in the market. Similarly, the UAE campus of the Virginia based George Mason University in Ras Al Khiamah also faced the same destiny in 2009 after three years of

struggles in the Higher Education market. It is apparent that the number of foreign Higher Education Institutions in the country is too surplus than actual requirements.

## **Challenges to Cultural Values and Identity**

Although the proponents of globalization of Higher Education claim that due consideration will be given to protect and preserve cultural identities of states, it does not happen always. It has been quite undesirable to the UAE cultural values and identity. The Higher Education is expected to have the responsibility of preserving and protecting the national cultures and prepare individuals for citizenship and serving the national social and economic objectives. But, this is not maintained in the UAE. The foreign universities in the UAE offer curricula that have little relevance to socio-cultural values of the country. They do not help in preserving and promoting Emirati culture, instill cultural identity and educate individuals for citizenship. The Emiratis educated in the universities abroad are also reported to have poor commitments to preserve Arab family values and culture. Traditionally, Arabs favor extended families and collectivism. However, the foreign university educated Emiratis have less inclination to these values. They tend to show great affinity to live in nuclear facilities. Moreover, they value individuality to the traditional collectivism. These changes create conflicts in family and community. Further, Arabs believe that education is a basic human right of human beings and it must be provided either free or at affordable cost. But, the foreign providers offer Higher Education at extremely high cost making higher education into an expensive marketable commodity that endangers the highly esteemed Arabs principles and values.

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Essentially, globalization of Higher Education is destroying the unique cultural identity of Emirati society instead of preserving and promoting it.

## **CONCLUSION**

Globalization has had many obvious effects on educational technology and communication systems change the way education is delivered as well as roles played by both teachers and students. The development of this technology is facilitating the transition from an industrial based society to an information-based one. At the same time, there is a dark side to globalization and to the very openness of the new information systems. While the richest countries grow richer, the poor are becoming poorer. Information and education gaps between the rich and the poor are widening not narrowing; economic crises, trade imbalances and structural adjustments have precipitated a moral crisis in many countries, tearing the basic social and cultural fabric of many families and communities apart, resulting in increasing youth unemployment, suicide, violence, racism and drug abuse and anti social behavior from schools. In the 21st century, education systems face the dual challenge of equipping students with the new knowledge, skills and values needed to be competitive in a global market while at the same time producing graduates who are responsible adults, good citizens both of their country and of the world. Thus globalization challenges us to rethink not only how much education is needed but also its ultimate purposes.

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