
Editorial

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1 Introduction and background

The internationalisation of higher education (HE) refers to “the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution” [Knight, (1993), p.21]. The HE internationalisation process must also “...be *entrenched* in the culture, policy, planning and organizational process of the institution so that it can be both successful and sustainable” [Qiang, (2003), p.258]. The sustainability of HE internationalisation has attracted some debate in recent years – from the entry mode strategies right through the attendant resource commitment, and risk levels of key players in the sector (see Calderwood, 2011). Indeed, Madichie and Kolo (2013) explored the opportunities and challenges from the context of a single country in the Middle East and North African (MENA) – i.e., the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Although there are differences in the severity of observed challenges that go with internationalisation, this may be a matter of minor degrees. However, the common denominators for two identified typologies (i.e., branch campuses and franchises/strategic partnerships) of higher education institutions (HEIs) remain *survivability* and *profitability*, which can translate into either success or failure. According to Madichie and Kolo (2013), for instance, the common denominators can be measured in terms of three key factors – *student enrolment*; *resource commitment* and/or *constraints*; and the *quality of faculty and staff*. While these denominators are arguably interrelated and complementary, they also seem to be mutually exclusive events in terms of their medium to long-term implications for the success of HEIs – and especially so in the MENA region. In the particular case of the UAE, these challenges have often impacted upon the *survivability* of foreign HEIs differently – especially in terms of branch campuses *vis-à-vis* franchised HEIs (see Madichie and Kolo, 2013). Nonetheless, challenges persist – from access to a global pool of expertise for the governance, administration and instruction (talent management); to issues of identification with established ‘brand’ names; quality control of programmes and operations due to accreditation requirements by both international (e.g., AACSB and EQUIS) and national certification entities (e.g., Ministries of Higher Education); robust support of alumni; and widespread support of corporations keen on demonstrating and/or promoting their corporate social responsibility/sustainability programmes; as well as employability concerns – for these HEIs. This calls for further reflection in a bid to reposition for the course of actions going forward.

2 Points for reflection

In the light of the above challenges, foreign HEIs in the MENA have attempted to understand what atypically constitutes the most cost-effective means of longevity and/or success in what seems to be an over-supplied market (Madichie, 2013, 2014) – perhaps primarily driven by economic, as opposed to social motives (Gulf News Special, 2008). Indeed, Kreber (2009, p.13) once argued that “a comprehensive conception of internationalization can help us resist undue emphasis on economic imperatives on the one hand, and purely cosmetic efforts at internationalizing the curriculum on the other – both at the expense of considerations of the common good”. Such concerns have far-reaching consequences, as they tend to converge around the global sustainability of HE and the role of HEIs in performing their core functions – i.e., education for sustainable development through research, teaching (and pedagogies), and service to the community – requiring an integrated approach to sustainability across disciplines. Indeed, and according to Kreber (2009, p.13), “in order for higher education to truly address sustainability problems and educate the citizenry to move toward sustainability, a fundamental re-thinking of the purpose of the university and how we teach is needed”. As a consequence of this, it was proposed that the scope of HE internationalisation may be assessed along one or more of the following four patterns [see Kreber, (2009), p.7]:

- 1 *recruitment* of international students
- 2 changes in the *teaching process*, through selection of particular course content and forms of delivery (including ICT), student mobility, language of instruction
- 3 development of *learning resources* – in the form of internationally recruited staff members, use of international course materials
- 4 *location* – offering courses or setting up campuses abroad.

3 The call for papers

Based on these aforementioned patterns, this special issue sought contributions from scholars within the MENA and/or those with research interests in the region to submit papers of all kinds – from empirical, to conceptual, practitioner and viewpoint papers in a bid to bolster the scant literature on the region. Indeed, a previous attempt at forging this pool was made in a previous special issue on whether the Middle East may be seen as the “land of the future” (Madichie, 2013) where, out of the assembled papers, none touched upon the efforts in business education across the region. This omission, according to the Guest Editor, “obviously calls for further debate in these areas”. It follows, therefore, and as a direct response to the observed missed opportunity, that this call for papers was issued in March 2014 encouraging scholars from the wider MENA region to make contributions – in a bid to developing a pool of research outputs on the one hand, and to address the much needed talent management, on the other hand. Key areas of concern were wide-ranging in scope:

- 1 What are the most popular internationalisation strategies of HEIs in the MENA region?
- 2 How have HEIs in the MENA responded to pressures to internationalise (what strategic alliances have been undertaken in the region both within and across countries)?
- 3 What are the key challenges (or outstanding issues) facing HEIs in the MENA region – ranging from student recruitment, retention, and finance issues?
- 4 How has the search for legitimacy affected the strategies of HEIs in the region?
- 5 To what extent has the HE curriculum been modified as a result of alignment of learning, teaching and assessment; curriculum development; licensure or licensing; accreditation and legitimacy; international student recruitment and destination choice; faculty recruitment and/or retention; quality assurance; student evaluation or satisfaction surveys.

However, it is clear once again, that the message has not resonated as expected – a situation that further marginalises scholarship in and/or from the region – albeit in a ‘self-inflicted’ manner. Be that as it may, five papers were finally accepted out of a pool of about 20 submissions, and hopefully these papers should spur responses and further areas for the research enquiry in the MENA.

4 Papers in this issue

Papers in this special issue touch upon various elements on the challenges of business education in the MENA and the attendant implications for the much needed talent management in the region. In the first paper by Lydia Barza and Marc Cohen, it was pointed out that “as economies in the MENA region have become increasingly global and dependent on foreign labor, higher education institutions have a responsibility to effectively incorporate ethics education”. The study presents an arguably ‘new’ interdisciplinary – albeit, case study based model (i.e., the ICE model) for teaching ethics in HE. This model is split into five components: the ethical dilemma involved; consequences of an action on self and others; how the environment may affect moral reasoning; how and why decision making may change when certain circumstances change; and a summary of one’s final decision.

Nnamdi Madichie in the second paper reflected upon the theme of the special issue in his observation that Arab Gulf states have attracted media attention arguably as the ‘dominant force in global higher education’ provision in the MENA. He pointed out that the Gulf states (notably the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar) have not only succeeded in attracting internationally reputed HEIs, but also western and/or western trained faculty as well as a large influx of international students (see Husain, 2002) to the region. Using what he describes as ‘a $3 \times 3 \times 3$ matrix’ he highlights how such attempts at a ‘trend reversal’ in the region may have arguably transformed it ‘from being a centre of knowledge reception to one of knowledge production’.

Still on the internationalisation debate, Alisson Andrade, Simone Galina, and Evandro Ribeiro in the third paper, examined the moderating effects of organisational slack and R&D intensity in multinational companies from the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) countries. These authors posited that there was a U-shaped relationship between the degree of internationalisation and the performance of multinational companies. The study concludes that the benefits of internationalisation are not obtained overnight, but require patience to be achieved; and that managers must view 'organisational slack' as a strategic tool for action in the international context.

In the fourth paper Byung Il Park and Sang Bae Jeong highlight how international joint ventures have increasingly provoked a predominant mode replacing the traditional market entry strategy because it is a vehicle to multi-directionally exchange invaluable complementary knowledge between multinationals and local firms through their subsidiaries. These authors note, however, that although such joint ventures constitute a multifaceted phenomenon, researchers often consider them in a fragmented manner by focusing only on the Greenfield type of collaborative arrangements often at the detriment of the Brownfield typology. Using a case-study of CJ LION, the authors highlight the willingness to communicate and possession of prior-related job/local market knowledge to be a proven, effective means to knowledge acquisition of host country nationals – as well as an invaluable avenue for multinationals with sights on emerging markets. In particular, expatriates in Brownfield type are often referred to as key actors for their knowledge exchange activities.

Kamel Fantazy and Nnamdi O. Madichie, in the fifth and final paper, continue the internationalisation debate by exploring the alternatives in standardisation/adaptation – from the purview of the teaching curriculum – with specific emphasis on the relevance of 'Western' Business Textbooks for the MENA (see also Madichie, 2010). According to them, while "research has suggested that the UAE is very competitive in the global higher education market. This raises questions as to whether its competitive advantage should be emphasized at the local, as opposed to global content in the instruction curriculum". In other words, should the curriculum adhere to global standards or should it be fully adapted to fit the local context? While the need to standardise texts in physical sciences may be a no-brainer, the persuasiveness for local content in the social sciences and humanities is quite strong. The results of this study are mixed – while some favour standardised texts, others argue for adaptation to the regional context. Proponents of the latter position, in our view, seem to have given the green light for multinational publishers to pursue regional adaptations.

The special issue wraps up with a book review on *Talent Management in Education* by Davies and Davies (2011), which arguably captures the essence of Business Education, as it illustrates some of the challenges facing the management of talent in that sector – with implications for the MENA region. Notable recommendations are provided in areas of academic freedom, talent identification, management support and collegiality – all key ingredients for the management and retention of talent in the HE sector.

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