

## Submissions Abstract Book - All Papers (Included Submissions)

**0440**

Innovative Internationalization: Exploring the (Re)modelled spaces in Dubai

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**Research Domain:** International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

**Abstract:**

Internationalization has reshaped higher education. Cross-border activity is a prominent branch bringing forward the internationalization perspective. The exponential yet regionally intertwined increase in international student mobility has led higher education institutions to experiment with delivery models. Although these models are not new, their growth and diversification overtime outline the emphasis placed on the international student market. These developments are understood as borderless and earmarked under “commercial presence” (GATS Framework Mode 3) wherein providers establish physical presence across their domestic borders by various means. Dubai offers a revamped yet innovative higher education system which is a conglomeration of international branch campuses labelled as education hubs. The emirate has strategically facilitated Internationalization into its development process which has attracted a majority of students and boosted its growth globally, making it an interesting field of exploration. The research outlines the innovative delivery mechanism-establishment of education hubs and associated increase of international students demands.

**Paper:**

**1. Context of research**

Internationalization processes have altered the global higher education landscape, constantly re-defining the aims and delivery of higher education. Higher education institutions (HEIs) have begun to experiment with different delivery methods such as branch campuses, double/joint degree programmes, franchising and twinning arrangements. The most recent development sieves out to be creation of international, regional and sub-regional education hub (EHs) spaces. As of 2012, there are six countries that have positioned themselves as EHs of which two are located in the Gulf region (United Arab Emirates and Qatar), three in Asia (Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore) and one in Africa (Botswana)<sup>1</sup>.

However, given the variety of delivery options available and the rise in student aspirations, the reasons for choosing Education Hubs are influenced by both internal and external variables. The context of the research thereby is to explore this innovative delivery mechanism in Dubai as well as the changing structure of student demands.

**2. Objective, Rationale and Methodology**

The current paper which analyzes the re-modelled delivery mechanism in Dubai is a part of my larger empirical study at the doctoral level. The research's main goal is to look into students socio-economic motivating factors for HEIs in Dubai, UAE that aren't related to traditional push and pull forces. The rationale for choosing Dubai is the multicultural learning environment it offers alongside numerous transnational education providers, making it a strong and vibrant market for EHs. The research was conducted using a two-step mixed method approach, which included both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Firstly, global student migration patterns and rising regionalization were analyzed through descriptive statistics, to understand the establishment of international branch campuses in common spaces known as education hubs. Secondly, a structured questionnaire was administered to 377 students currently studying in the last semester of their graduate (bachelor's degree) level in education hubs from disciplines such as Social Sciences, Business management and Engineering. Exploratory Factor Analysis and Principal Component Method are used as the analytical tools to recognize the socio-economic factors. Additionally, interviews were carried out with students, academic staff and regulatory authorities.

### **3. Results and Contextual Framework**

A thorough analysis of Dubai's educational policy reveals that Dubai, has 56 private higher education institutions overall with an approximate number of 60,000 students. It consists of ten Free Zone clusters which are: Dubai Knowledge Park (DKP), Dubai Internet City (DIC), and Dubai International Academic City (DIAC). Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC), Dubai Multi Commodities Centre (DMCC), and Dubai Health Care City (DHCC), Silicon Oasis in Dubai (DSO) as well as Dubai South that host HEIs<sup>2</sup>. The majority of higher education providers and students in the emirate now reside in free zones, with 36 institutions enrolling approximately 29,000<sup>A</sup> students<sup>3</sup>. International Branch Campuses play a four-fold role in context of Dubai. The first is fulfilling excess higher education demands of the expatriate population as well as the international student community who choose to study in the emirate. Secondly, providing access to innovative programs for a global education experience. For instance, curricula from at least 11 countries are available in Dubai's IBCs, including Australia, Belgium, France, India, Iran, Ireland, Lebanon, Pakistan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The movement or migration of students being driven by geographical proximity in current times is an interesting phenomenon. Dubai, UAE for instance had an inflow of students from 167 countries in 2016-17 into its higher education sector of which almost 30% were from middle-east region, 56.4% from Asia and 5.5% and 5.1% from Europe and Africa respectively<sup>4</sup>. A student's decision to pursue a higher degree can thus be considered as an investment of time, effort, and money in exchange for material advantages (such as the prestige of being educated and self-accomplishment), higher income, and knowledge advancement. On the other side, the burgeoning higher education industry results in a wide range of services. Students can choose from a variety of subjects of study, HEIs with better or lower rankings, alternative study modes, and much more.

### **4. Conclusion**

The re-modelled delivery mechanism in Dubai is an attractive development of higher education. It acts like a magnet to self-funded economically better-off individuals. The Free Zone arrangements bring forward the inclusivity factor of Internationalization, i.e., they provide access to higher

education services at a comparatively lower cost than the home campuses. Consecutively, a higher return in respect of academically better degrees, wider exposure, better means of immigration and socio-cultural development is garnered by the students availing degrees from these arrangements.

**References: A.**

**Inbound-Degree seeking students in IBCs in Dubai**



Source: KHDA, 2020

**References**

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