

Internationalization of Higher Education with Reference to the Arab Context: Proposed Model

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ABSTRACT: This study aimed at articulating a model to put internationalization of higher education within the local and regional contexts. The model starts from theoretical premises inter alia: universities are established to advance knowledge which is by its very nature universal but they at the same time exist in nation states which have their own interests; nation states are not only entities of the world order but also parts of their regional orbit; and knowledge could be seen both as virtue sought for its own sake and as power and income generating good that is chased for utilitarian purposes. Expressed otherwise knowledge and education including higher education are not neutral but rather contested terrains. The question is how to be internationalized without being de-regionalized and de-nationalized (or de-contextualized). This is the thrust of this paper. Towards this purpose the author conducted a systematic review of related literature and models, articulated the points of departure and designed his own model. The author presented the proposed model and commented on it following the DDI modeling steps (Denoting, demonstrating and interpretation). The study ended with concluding remarks.

KEYWORDS: Internationalization of Higher Education, Arab Universities, Internationalization Model.

Introduction

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Higher education by its very nature had always been international. Since Plato's "Academy" 500 years BC through the "*Studium Generales*" of the Islamic world and Medieval Europe the pursuit of knowledge and intellectual curiosity had never stopped at national confines. The peripatetic scholars felt at home at any of those academic heavens irrespective of country of origin. However the emergence of the "nation-states" in the Post Renaissance ushered in a new era of fierce economic as well as political competition among nations. Institutions of higher education were called upon to give an edge in economic competition and to contribute to the nation building. One of the ramifications was the increasing intervention of governments in higher education "a 'divergence' from the old universities model which was fully autonomous from governments" (Kerr, 1990). As a consequence national purposes in relation to higher education have superseded or at least competed with advancing knowledge. On the other hand there was a shift from knowledge as a "noble pursuit" to knowledge as 'power-and-income-generating" source. "It is ironic that internationalization of the economies led to nationalization of the universities" (Ibid)

However the 1990s witnessed a 'partial re-convergence' in Kerr's words, or 're-internationalization' as Teichler (2007) puts it. The sociopolitical and economic conditions of the world courted the global society to move toward an era of informed, culturally sensitive collaboration. Institutions of higher education (IHEs) followed suit by including global and international themes in their mission statements and strategic plans. A global university must now be characterized by its engagement with the processes of globalization, its international networks and its internationalized curriculum. Students as well as scholars sojourn now not only at Western universities but go to Japan, China and East Asia (Altbach, 2005).

The increasing interest in the international dimension of higher education, particularly during the past few decades has led to its emergence as a research area in its own right. However the overlapping and potential conflict between internationalization and nationalization is under researched. From another angle research is also almost reticent on

regionalization. These lacunas shall be considered in the present proposed model. Towards this aim the author conducts a systematic review of literature and related models on basis of which he articulates his proposed model.

This paper aims at contributing to this scholarly endeavor by proposing a model that fits the Arabic-Islamic context with a view to enlighten decision and policy makers and to call upon other researchers to pick up from here, augment and advance this thesis.

Methodology

This is a ‘non-linguistic descriptive’ model. Models are hypothetical constructs that through a decoding-encoding process come up with a better understanding of the world and a re-construction of reality. However it remains a simulation of the reality but not the reality itself. The proposed model applies a style of reasoning that comprises the so-called DDI stages of learning: denotation, demonstration, and interpretation. By denotation we establish a representation relation between the model and the target; by demonstration we investigate the features of the model and by interpretation we make claims about the target system (Frigg and Hatmann, 2012; Weisberg, 2012).

Related Literature

While universities world-wide are promoting internationalization, achieving a common definition of ‘internationalization’ has not proved simple. Furthermore, the existence of related terms such as ‘International education’, ‘international dimension’, and ‘globalization of higher education’ that are interchangeably used can lead to confusion.

Knight (2004), defined the term as ‘The process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education’ (Knight, 2004, p. 3). The keywords *process* and *integration* imply that internationalization is an ongoing concern

that impacts upon the mission and function of higher education. Ebuchi's definition (1999) concurs with the above definition that internationalization is a process by which the teaching, research and 'service' functions of a higher education system become internationally and cross-culturally compatible.

The continuous and dynamic nature of the process of internationalization, the multi stakeholder involvement, and the need for commitment from the institution's leadership are noted in Ellingboe's (1998) definition of internationalization as "an ongoing future-oriented, multidimensional, multidisciplinary, leadership-driven vision that involves many stakeholders working to change the internal dynamics of an institution to respond and adapt appropriately to an increasingly diverse, globally focused, ever-changing external environment" (Ellingboe, 1998, p. 199).

Kalvemark and Der Wende (2007) introduces the national policy into their definition of internationalization as "a systematic, sustained effort (undertaken by governments) aimed at making higher education (system of a certain country) (more) responsive to the requirements and challenges related to the globalization of societies, economy and labor markets. These requirements may concern all aspects of higher education: academic programs, research, students and graduates, faculty and staff, management and administration and reforms, etc".

Internationalization vs. Globalization

There is a general agreement among researchers that albeit closely related, the two terms are different with distinct rationales, objectives and effects. In particular "Internationalization" conjures up increasing cross-border activities amidst persistence of borders, while "globalization" refers to similar activities associated with erosion of borders (Knight (2004). This antithetic 'persistence-erosion' of borders denotes the nature of globalization as fundamentally an economic process of integration that transcends national borders and ultimately affects the flow of knowledge, people, values and ideas. It is in a sense a supra process. By contrast internationalization refers to interconnectedness between national education systems, in which borders and national

authorities are not questioned. As such globalization influences rather than be influenced while internationalization is a steerable policy process (Luijten-Lub et al. 2005, pp. 149-150).

The economic thrust of globalization is noted by Rosnani (2015) who associates globalization mainly to the hegemony of the market considerations. Conversely internationalization is the confluence of the local with the international. In the context of educational settings, internationalization occurs through the migration of students and lecturers; the exchange of knowledge through study abroad programs, technical know-how and skills; the broader use of a lingua franca, in particular English as a medium of instruction; and the adoption of international curriculum and standards.

According to Yeatman (1993) globalization is a move from “welfare” to “competition” state, in which the only licensed forms of intervention in the economy by the state are those which enhance national economic competitiveness.

Talgeri (2000) drew the distinction between globalization and internationalization as follows: “Globalization tends to homogenization of social, economical, cultural and academic processes and the marginalization of peripheral cultural and other social processes. Internationalization looks for participatory intervention among equal partners.” This definition highlights a growing concern, especially in developing countries, that globalization will lead to homogenization of cultures. This connotation is especially serious when globalization is used interchangeably with internationalization, because it makes countries and institutions weary of efforts to internationalize.

Scott (as cited in Callan 2000. p.18) saw a dialectical relationship between internationalization and globalization. For him, the essence of internationalization was captured by the image of a world over-dominated by nation states. Globalization, on the other hand “implies a radical reordering of this world order,” (Scott, 1998, p. 126) whereby new regional and global alliances and power blocks emerge. For Scott, internationalization was “a condition with which universities have always been comfortable” and globalization “a much more volatile and turbulent phenomenon”.

Internationalization vs. Regionalization

Regionalization has been attached more significance in the last few decades as a link that connects nationalization with internationalization. From this perspective, regionalization becomes tributary to the Internationalization process. Regionalization and Internationalization, which have been considered as two contradictory trends, are in reality closely bound up with each other (Orton, 2000). University regionalization also embraces a harmonious interaction between universities and local communities. By improving the development of local societies, universities develop themselves. In this sense, regionalisation and Internationalization are two aspects of a broader phenomenon, with universities having to establish relations with a whole array of outside partners (Drilhon, 1993).

Altbach (1992b), for example, recognises Hong Kong universities as part of an international academic community, by way of analysing their special role in the Asian region, especially with respect to the Chinese cultural sphere. By providing regional academic leadership, Hong Kong universities can at the same time promote their Internationalization. The emergence of networks of university relations networks in some relatively wide regions itself means some progress towards Internationalization.

In the European Western literature Europeanization is the regionally oriented version of internationalization. In the Asian region, especially within the Chinese cultural sphere Hong Kong universities play special role. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the University Mobility of the Asia-Pacific (UMAP), and European networks via (ERASMUS) and (TEMPUS) and Socrates foster regional cooperation, discussion of common problems, regional scholarship programs and some institutional links. In Japan the current internationalization policy puts into consideration regionalization and focuses on the rapidly changing context in the Asian region where Japan was once the Imperial master. In the Arab and Islamic world the Association of Arab Universities, ALESCO, ISISCO and the Arab Gulf Educational Bureau can potentially be an important force for the

improvement of universities, coordinating academic activities in order to avoid duplication, ensure the most effective use of limited funds, and create the best means of dealing with “central” academic systems of the industrialized nations.

Nationalization, Internationalization and Regionalization of Arab Higher Education

Arab higher education could be traced back to the high *madrasa* of *Al Azhar*, *Al Qarawiyyun*, *Al Zaytouna* and *Cordoba* and other academies such as the observatories, hospitals and *Beit al Hikama* that flourished in Muslim cities until the 16th century which were the model upon which first European universities of Bologna and Paris were built in early second millennium.

When the center of gravity shifted to Europe in the 16th century those institutes fell in static situation satisfying themselves with reproduction of knowledge. In the second half of the 19th century the American University of Beirut and the Jesuit University in Lebanon were the first modern universities to be established in the Arab world. The first modern non foreign university in the Arab world, Cairo University was established early last century but a number of higher colleges were established in Egypt in the 19th century.

The advent of these modern universities ushered in an era of dualism: the existence of modern European like universities on the one hand and the old traditional universities such as *Al Azhar* University on the other. Building of Islamic traditional universities and modern universities continued till today thus deepening dualism. Dualism is considered one of the malaise to Islamic education as it is responsible among other factors to produce two sets of graduates with different value systems.

Many attempts were done to tackle this issue inter alia: modernization of traditional universities, infusing *Sharia* colleges in modern universities and establishing new versions of Islamic universities based on integration of both revealed and acquired knowledge, (IIUM is an example).

The irony is that the Islamic traditional universities and the foreign modern universities are internationalized by their very nature more than the national public universities.

The investment in school education in the post independence Arab countries, among other factors, helped in transforming higher education from elite to mass higher education. Higher education became a social demand and an important tool for social mobility, social justice and re-engineering the society in general. However the massification of Arab higher education left much to be desired. The inadequacy of Arab higher education is well documented: over-evaluation of the general teaching university, poor research, redundancy of the most attractive disciplines, the related increase in graduate unemployment, the brain drain of the most skilled and the unavailability of vocational training, to cite but few (Romani, 2009).

Essentially though, the social demand for higher education went unabated. Later in the century and under the influence of the neo-liberal policies many Arab countries attempted to transform their economies from the traditional agricultural and industrial basis to services and recently to K-economy and information technology (El Arabi, 2009; Masri, 2009). This shift was seen as an important means by which Arab countries can successfully integrate into the global economy which required a highly educated workforce that can confidently compete not only in the national labor market but in the international globalized market. The shift towards service and k-economy and the advent of transnational corporations required new jobs and manpower with particular skills like fluency in English, computer literacy and efficiency and competitive abilities. With the shift to k-economy the focus has gone beyond 'education as a tool to restructure the economy' to a 'tool to develop human resources'.

As a function of those developments higher education institutions increased leaps and bounds and student enrollments in higher education grew rapidly even in countries with historically restrictive tertiary systems. To accommodate

expanding in enrollments in higher education many Arab countries introduced, encouraged and legitimized novel forms of higher education including private universities, virtual learning, open universities, parallel education, franchised programs and offshoots of foreign campuses all of which marked a new era of neo-liberal orientation (Atari, 2015).

However privatization was the most salient form of these novel trends. Private universities in some Arab countries such as Jordan and Lebanon currently outnumber the Government or public universities.

A special kind of privatization is the ‘imported internationalization’ of higher education. Rather than improving the quality of public institutions, Arab and in particular Gulf States have invited international universities to set up satellite campuses in their territories. The ambitions of a leading role of these oil producing countries and the nature of their hydro-carbonic dependent economy coincided with an urgent need in many universities in the developed countries to go global. The result was the establishing of satellite campuses of many prestigious universities in the Gulf Arab countries (The education city in Qatar is case in point). North American universities in particular are now delivering in the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Jordan. In Syria there are European and European-Syrian private universities. However, academic standards at these international institutions are very high, and only a small percentage of students actually qualify for them. In fact, Qatar University—the only public university in Qatar—enrolls 91 percent of Qatari students, while the elite universities at the Education City enroll only 9 percent. It might be presumed that expensive, private American-style universities’ primary role in the Gulf is not to educate Gulf States’ students for a knowledge economy, but rather, to bring prestige and international acclaim to the Gulf States (Buckner, 2011).

The above account shows that Arab higher education is still national with a mild internationalization flavor. If academic mobility is taken as indicator of internationalization then Arab universities are lagging behind. This is quite natural as academic

mobility is shaped by language, immigration policy, history, culture and economic return. For these reasons Arab students prefer Western universities. In 2008 over 220000 students from the Arab countries (representing 7.3%) of international students studying abroad were from the Arab countries (Jaramillo, A., 2012). On the other hand Arab universities are not attractive for international students for the above reasons besides being teaching and demand absorber universities rather than research universities. Therefore Arab universities host few students from OECD nations. International non Arab students mostly from Muslim countries may be seen in the Departments of Arabic and Islamic studies. However due to the geographic proximity, cost, language and culture some Arab universities could be seen as regional universities where a sort of student and staff academic mobility exists up to a level.

Except for some Arab Gulf countries Arab governments are more inclined towards "controlled internationalization" and are hesitant to give accreditations to international Universities to operate in those countries, especially those which are completely foreign-funded and supported. To compensate for the lack of international presence, one of the policies is to sign cooperation programs between public universities and international institutions with a view to enable students to become more confident in dealing with the international community in general.

Models of Internationalization of Higher Education

Clark's triangle (1983) is the oldest model used as a framework to describe the role and influence of the various forces and actors, namely: authorities (governments), markets and the academic oligarchies that influence the internationalization of higher education in a particular country.

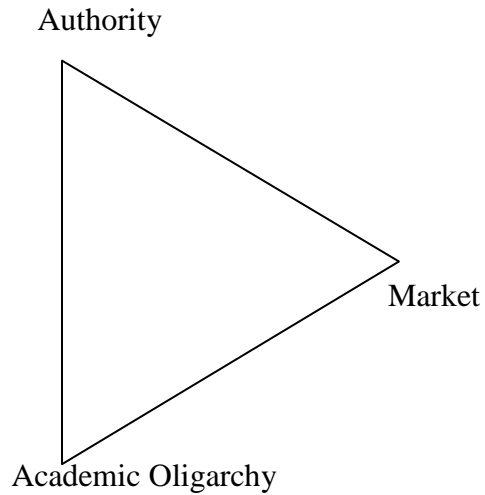
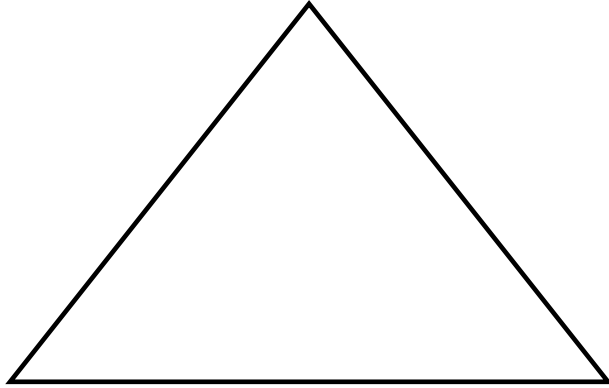


Figure 2 Clark's Triangle Model
Source: Clark, B., (1983)

An adaptation of Clark's triangle was employed by Akiyochi (2009) to understand the complexity of the situation facing Japan. The hypothesis of this modified model is that there is a gap of responsiveness in ongoing globalization trends.

Academic/Universities ++



Market/Students ++

State / Government++

Source: Akiyoshi (2009)

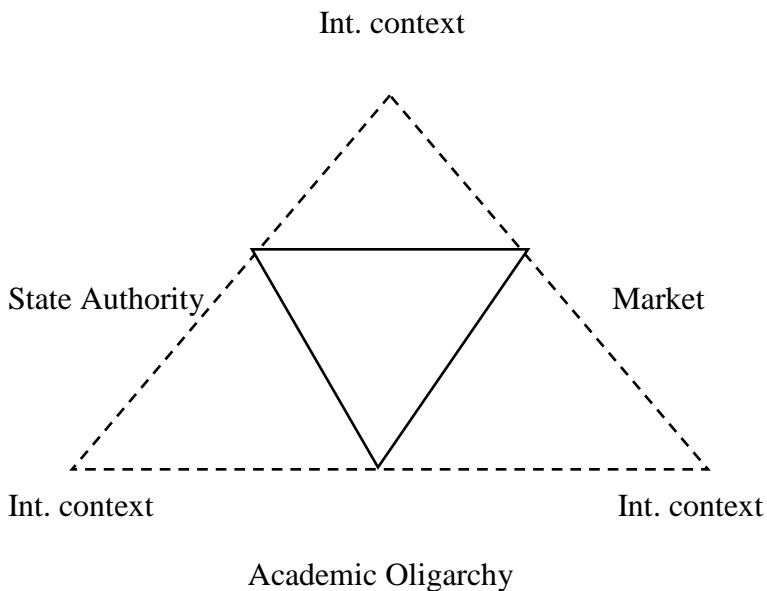
Based on the above model Akiyoshi (2009) arrived at the following conclusions:

Governments in Japan tend to be highly responsive to globalization trends as governments are more aware of information regarding policy trends. Policy borrowing is expedited under the ideologies of globalization, regional arena and the knowledge economy. By contrast academics and universities are generally less responsive than governments but more responsive than the market and students. International academic exchanges are increasing and domination of English as academic lingua franca is already taken for granted – at least in the natural sciences and engineering fields. The Internet based

communication provides enormous opportunities for borderless academic communication and research cooperation without physical encounter. Finally students and markets are least responsive to globalization trends. The great majority seems to be satisfied with local settings or much less able to adapt to international settings. Akiuychi holds that strong domestic social and economic power in Japan could work to discourage academics, universities and students to seriously internationalize. Therefore even if the government tries to exert pressures or offer incentives for internationalization, academics, universities and students may not respond as desired.

Multi Triangle Model

Kalvemark, M., and der Wende (1997) put Clark's triangle model in an international context "By placing the model in an international context we describe the international characteristics of the interactive forces that determine the coordination of the higher education system in a certain country. Secondly, we can explore the new areas of influence and investigate how the relationships and interaction between these forces are affected by the international context".



According to the multi triangles model the international orientation forms an integral part of the internal policies in economy and trade in countries with a strong education export or marketing policy. The international educational context could be seen in many ways: The labor market for graduates, the market of prospective students, the international academic mobility of scholars, networking and cooperation, joint education and research efforts and programs, mutual recognition, international peer review, and even strategic cooperation at the administrative and management levels.

The model raises questions about the interplay of the national forces and the international context regarding the shaping of national policies for higher education and institutional policies.

It is noteworthy that the authors of the model in their elaboration touch upon regionalization. According to the multi triangles model "cooperation may emerge between adjacent countries for purposes of mutual benefit from educational offerings and infrastructure, for enhancement of the system's effectiveness or with the aim of reducing system differences and related obstacles". The authors of the model refer to Nordic cooperation, Franco-German Council for Higher Education, the neighboring countries policy of the Netherlands with parts of Belgium and Germany, etc. as examples.

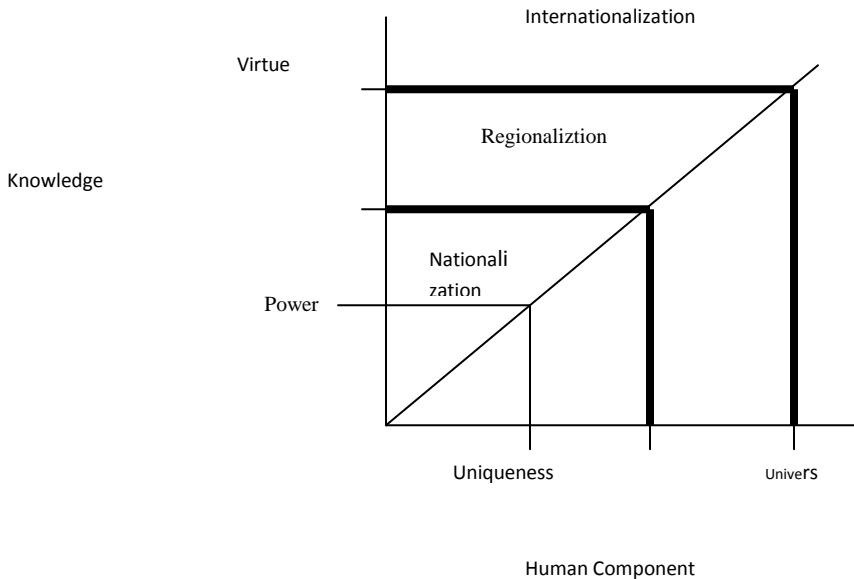
Comments on the above models

The above models show that the receptivity of internationalization or by contrast the satisfaction with the national system of education is the function of three main factors, namely the governments, the academe and the market. The three factors do not necessarily work in harmony. Each has its own agenda which would converge or diverge with the other to a certain level. Thus the academe in Japan and much less the market and the students are not enthusiastic to the government's internationalization policies. They particularly the academe

suffice themselves with some cross-border/cross-cultural activities. Culture, language and history play role. Japan is well known for homogeneity; its language is not widely used outside its borders or immediate vicinity or orbit besides a feeling of self sufficiency. The situation is different in the Western countries which are plural societies with a long history of exporting education and accommodating foreign students and staff.

On the other hand the above models start from economic market driven orientations rather that metaphysical premises regarding the very nature of knowledge and human agency which shall be accommodated in the author's model.

The Author's Proposed Model



Points of Departure

Philosophical Premises

While the previous models are concerned with the role of main players (governments, the market and the academia) in internationalization of higher education the present author starts from a sort of philosophical premises. The first premise is that knowledge could be viewed on a continuum of 'virtue' and 'power'. Knowledge as virtue is associated with religions, ideal philosophers and service oriented people. The more we view knowledge as 'virtue' the more we approximate 'internationalization' and vice versa. Knowledge as power is associated with competition, rivalry and profit generation. The more we approach knowledge as power the more we approximate nationalization. Knowledge as virtue requires dissemination of and free access to knowledge. By contrast knowledge as power introduces intellectual property rights, access restrictions, commercialization and the like in order to maintain privileges and hegemony of the dominating forces.

The second premise is related to the duality of uniqueness and distinctiveness of the universal human component(s). The more we emphasize universalism the more we approach internationalization. Therefore universities by their commitment to advancing human knowledge are international enterprises. However, human knowledge is often contextual. This contextualization may take the forms of funding, regulatory framework, governance, curricula, or credentials. The question is whether 'internationalization' and contextualization ('nationalization') can work in harmony or antagonistically (Kerr, 1990). Should we view universities as vessels for the dissemination of global knowledge or as tools to cultural and epistemological hegemony, where forms of the powerful culture and knowledge work to put the other (mostly the underdeveloped) in psychological disadvantage?

The author's model included regionalization as essential part of his model. Needless to say that regionalization in the

present model stands for the Arab and Islamic region. For regionalization in the Arabic Islamic context to be a going concern we set forth the following:

Regionalization shall maintain the Arabic Islamic values prominent of which is the position on knowledge as virtue rather than commodity. To disseminate knowledge is a mission. We should not neglect knowledge as power but we should confer on it positive connotations. The relevancy of knowledge, shared values and social responsibility should be attached high significance. The educative socio cultural considerations should not be sacrificed for the sake of the market.

Regionalization should be embedded in firmly established institutional relationships between Arab Islamic HEIs that go beyond the political establishments so that they do not succumb to political whims. Distinguished pan Arab Islamic universities should be established to create "resources pool" of scholars and scientists, to be forums for discussions and exchange of experience and expertise, and to conduct joint research projects. There is a need to have regional institutions besides the national ones.

The position of Arabic language should be maintained. We should distinguish between the mastering of a foreign language particularly the English language and using it as a medium of instruction on a great scale. Arabic language as well as the Islamic background should be seen as positive markers of identity.

Academic mobility of scholars should be encouraged. Unfortunately academic mobility of Arab and probably Muslim scholars at this point in time is economic driven and one way activity (from labor producing countries to labor receiving countries). Though this kind of mobility is acceptable but it should be expanded to become scholarly driven and two ways pursuit.

Regionalization conjures up all the requirements to generate revolutionary knowledge that contributes to human

knowledge and at the same time reflects the collective memory of the Arab Islamic region. Among those requirements are the articulation of an Arab Islamic paradigm of research that helps promote distinctiveness and uniqueness; the establishment of scholarly communities and all types of scholarly communications that anchor the scholarly paradigm, research, knowledge and collective memory in Arabic Islamic milieu.

The above requirements should be an integral part of a strategic plan and civilizational project that put this region at the contributing and not only on the receiving end.

Concluding Remarks

International activities within higher education have substantially increased over recent years, and predictions suggest that they are likely to increase further in the future. However, while there is an increasing need to promote the Internationalization of higher education there is clearly no overall consensus regarding the concept. It has been interpreted in many ways, and is often used interchangeably with other terms. Generally speaking for a university, internationalization means the awareness and operation of interactions within and between cultures through its teaching, research and service functions, with the ultimate aim of achieving mutual understanding across cultural borders. For a national higher education system, internationalization refers to dialogue with those in other countries. Internationalization, in fact, is not a newly emergent topic or phenomenon. In fact, it dates from very ancient history.

By contrast globalization views higher education from technological economic perspective and knowledge as commodity which can be traded through attracting students paying high fees, or through “trans-national education”, e.g. setting up branch campuses abroad or “franchising” programs. Higher education institutions should toil to enhancing their international reputation and visibility according to criteria employed in worldwide “rankings” of universities failing such paradigm shift HEIs would court redundancy.

Internationalization is needed by modern universities, owing to the complexity and open nature of modern life and

society, and also for the development of local societies. Much of the content of regional development problems is, of course, shaped by the thoughts and practices of the local society, but emerging issues are often then discussed in an explicitly international frame of reference. An international perspective is thus necessary when dealing with local development, and vice versa.

Owing to the fact that Western culture, including the model of a modern university, is still the dominant reality internationalization of higher education has sometimes acquired negative connotations in less-developed countries such as the one-sided adaptation, the neglect of national characteristics and the loss of international status.

Even in Europe some forms of internationalization for example the vertical mobility from outside Europe to Europe is criticized as calling for adaptation rather than for learning from contrast, for benefiting the financial elites of poor countries, and for contributing to brain drain. As regards intra-European mobility, a survey has shown that the professional value of studying in another European country is declining to some extent, because such international experiences are losing more and more their exclusiveness and distinctiveness (Teichler2007). Again, these observations strengthen the view that efforts to internationalize higher education cannot opt anymore for stand-alone activities, but have to integrate border-crossing activities with some steps towards international convergence and with mainstream activities at home.

Cooperation and mobility on equal terms is proposed to embed international activities into the general activities of higher education institutions: efforts are increasingly made to shape international activities into mainstream activities and to ensure that the mainstream activities are developed in such a way that they serve the international activities.

Research on university internationalization is at present far from adequate, especially empirical studies from an international comparative perspective. Particularly absent are

studies that aim to clarify the manner in which internationalization is conceptualized in Third World universities, and to also investigate the decisive factors, limitations and feasibility of internationalization of higher education in less-developed non-Western countries.

Conclusion

It is the author's hope that the method we have provided may inform and guide additional research in diverse institutions and regions around the world. New research may also want to include participants within IHEs who represent faculty, students, and staff, as well as administrators. The effort to implement international perspectives and develop a global imagination, with a capacity to establish how knowledge is linked internationally, is in its infancy. Learning from other institutions that are in the change process is invaluable for us and others who invested in the complex and contextual course of internationalizing the campus experience.

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