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<https://doi.org/10.26577/JOS.2022.v103.i4.012>**N. Kairanbayev***, **R. Kudaibergenova**Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Kazakhstan, Almaty
*e-mail: kairanbayev.n.s@gmail.com

THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPUSES' ROLE IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UAE

Internationalization of higher education includes recruiting international students, collaborating on joint programs, pursuing international accreditation, becoming world-class universities, developing international quality assurance systems, and establishing an educational hub. Foreign campuses are one of the most common models of internationalization.

The purpose of this article is to study and evaluate the experience of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in higher education, especially the impact of international branch campuses on the education system in the country. We believe this experience of the UAE's reforms in the education system deserves attention for universities in Kazakhstan. We explore the reasons for the growth of transnational campuses, as well as their benefits. In particular, the increase in numbers of foreign Alma-maters may enhance the quality of teaching in public universities. Moreover, we found that accreditation is a sort of internationalization model of higher education, which was not given enough attention by scientists. The data for this study were collected from peer-reviewed academic journals, available official records on their websites and official reports.

Key words: Internationalization, international branch campuses, universities, UAE.

Н. Кайранбаев*, Р. Кудайбергенова

Әл-Фараби атындағы Қазақ ұлттық университеті, Қазақстан, Алматы қ.
*e-mail: kairanbayev.n.s@gmail.com

БАӘ-нің жоғары білім берудегі халықаралық кампустар рөлі

Жоғары білім беруді интернационалдандыру халықаралық студенттерді тартуды, бірлескен бағдарламалар бойынша ынтымақтастықты, халықаралық аккредитациядан өтуді, әлемдік деңгейдегі университеттерге айнауды, сапаны қамтамасыз етудің халықаралық жүйелерін дамытуды және білім беру хабын құруды қамтиды. Шетелдік кампустар – интернационалдандырудың кең таралған үлгілерінің бірі.

Бұл мақаланың мақсаты – Біріккен Араб Әмірліктерінің (БАӘ) жоғары білім беру тәжірибесін, әсіресе халықаралық кампустардың елдегі білім беру жүйесіне әсерін зерттеу және бағалау. Біріккен Араб Әмірліктерінің білім беру жүйесіндегі бұл реформалардың тәжірибесі Қазақстан университеттері үшін назар аударуға лайық деп санаймыз. Біз трансұлттық кампустардың өсу себептерін, сондай-ақ олардың артықшылықтарын зерттейміз. Атап айтқанда, шетелдік университеттер санының артуы мемлекеттік университеттердегі оқыту сапасын жоғарылатуы мүмкін. Сонымен қатар біз ғалымдар жеткілікті көңіл бөлмеген аккредитациялау жоғары білім беруді интернационалдандырудың үлгісі екенін анықтадық. Бұл зерттеуге арналған деректер рецензияланатын академиялық журналдардан, олардың веб-сайттарындағы қолжетімді ресми жазбалардан және ресми есептерден жиналды.

Түйін сөздер: Интернационализация, халықаралық кампустар, университеттер, БАӘ.

Н. Кайранбаев*, Р. Кудайбергенова

Казахский национальный университет имени аль-Фараби, Казахстан, г. Алматы.
*e-mail: kairanbayev.n.s@gmail.com

Роль международных кампусов в высшем образовании в ОАЭ

Интернационализация высшего образования включает набор иностранных студентов, сотрудничество в совместных программах, получение международной аккредитации, превращение в университеты мирового класса, разработку международных систем обеспечения качества и создание образовательного центра. Зарубежные кампусы – одна из самых распространенных моделей интернационализации.

Целью данной статьи является изучение и оценка опыта Объединенных Арабских Эмиратов (ОАЭ) в сфере высшего образования, особенно влияние международных филиалов на систему образования в стране. Мы считаем, что этот опыт реформ ОАЭ в системе образования заслуживает внимания для университетов Казахстана. Мы исследуем причины роста транснациональных кампусов, а также их преимущества. В частности, увеличение числа иностранных альма-матер может повысить качество преподавания в государственных университетах. Более того, мы обнаружили, что аккредитация является своего рода моделью интернационализации высшего образования, которой ученые не уделяли должного внимания. Данные для этого исследования были собраны из рецензируемых академических журналов, доступных официальных отчетов на их веб-сайтах.

Ключевые слова: интернационализация, международные филиалы, университеты, ОАЭ.

Introduction

The content of a university education has changed dramatically over the last decade, and the integration of various educational systems has begun to make the international factor a major focus in higher education. Simultaneously, the concept of «internationalization of higher education», which had evolved from the concept of «international education», emerged. Since 1990s, it has gained popularity in the education industry (Jones and Hans, 2012). Urban and Palmer (2014) stressed that it has become a quality indicator in higher education.

Internationalization is linked to a wide range of educational processes, according to scientists and researchers, who offer a variety of definitions and characteristics. To begin, it is important to specify the concept of «internationalization of higher education». De Wit (2015) defines it as “the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society”. The internationalization of universities was described by Knight (1994) as ‘the process of integrating an international, intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution’. This process, according to Aziz and Abdullah (2012), is “a bridge that may bring the local and international community together and allow them to contribute their expertise and experiences”.

However, according to Hou (2014), the internationalization of tertiary education raises a number of issues, including recruiting international students, collaborating on joint programs, pursuing international accreditation, becoming world-class universities, developing international quality assurance systems, and establishing an educational hub. It is also concerned with issues such as learning and teaching, education, assessment, career development, mea-

surement, and graduate quality. It is also involved with values and intercultural understanding, and it can be considered within traditional educational programs, higher education, or training courses for university researchers or academic members (Fatemeh et. al. 2011).

Hawawini (2011), professor and former dean of The Business School for the World, Singapore, outlined five international reach models:

(1) the import model, which aims to attract students, staff, and faculty from all over the world to the institution’s campus by having as many nationalities as possible represented in their programs, faculty, administration, and governing body.

(2) the export model is intended to send students overseas through student exchange agreements with international higher education institutions, to provide programs abroad, and to encourage faculty to teach and do research at foreign universities. The fundamental benefit of this strategy is that it promotes students and staff to different countries and cultures, therefore broadening their knowledge and experience.

(3) The academic joint-venture model usually begins with student exchange programmes, which allow undergraduate or graduate students to study at a foreign university. It eventually grows into academic or curricular collaborative ventures in which universities from different nations design and offer joint programmes, with graduates getting either two independent diplomas, one from each participating institution or a single co-signed degree.

(4) In partnership model, two or more universities might develop deeper international alliances under the partnership model, agreeing to collaborate on a number of projects (student and faculty exchanges, joint programs, faculty research, etc.). They may decide to allow students enrolled in the partner’s university to take their respective courses and programs. Students can acquire two degrees, one from each institution, if they take a sufficient amount of courses at each. Faculty from one institu-

tion could teach at the partner's institution as part of their workload. Major research funds are designed to support research initiatives undertaken by joint projects of faculty members from both universities.

(5) In the foreign-campus model, academic institutions also could develop overseas through physical presence, similar to firms' direct foreign investment (Kim and Zhu, 2009). They can open campuses in other countries that provide a variety of academic programs and services to both domestic and foreign students.

Another study (Liu and Dai, 2012) looks at three specific issues related to internationalization of higher education: the internationalization of curricula and teaching, management, and communication. Unlike the internationalization of curriculum perspective, which considers the issue from the perspective of international faculty, curriculum, and foreign language use, the internationalization of university management examines the internal and external operating mechanisms. Since internationalization takes place at all levels of the university, exchange and collaboration occur at all levels as well. Academic research, collaborative education, and teacher-student exchange are identified as three areas of exchange and cooperation.

The arguments for internationalization of higher education differ in and between governments. Knight (1999, pp. 9–10) identifies several reasons for internationalization, including human resource development, strategic alliances, commercial trade, nation building and socio/cultural development, cultural identity, citizenship development, national security, technical assistance, peace and mutual understanding, and economic growth and competitiveness.

Ghasempoor et al. (2011) also provide some justifications for internationalization:

- 1) The political or national rationale – ideological influences on a country;
- 2) The academic rationale is to achieve international standards for the institution, which is typically undertaken by institutions to ensure high-quality global standards;
- 3) The economic rationale is viewed as a direct response to market forces aimed at increasing revenue for the university while also developing human capital.

Material and Methods

This study's methodology is a secondary research study conducted through a systematic literature review. In order to conduct secondary research,

a large amount of literature is examined, including peer-reviewed academic journals, available official records on their websites, and official reports. The majority of the study's relevant literature was carefully reviewed, along with the necessary summary and analysis methods. Some statistical information is also obtained from online access points.

Higher education in the UAE

The UAE's academic institutions, just like the country itself, are relatively new. Higher education system of the UAE consists of three forms (Austin et al., 2014):

- 1) The federal-level public system, which includes government-owned and operated universities and higher institutes of technology;
- 2) State-level semi-public universities, which are typically for-profit and owned by private and state shareholders. Expatriate students are primarily enrolled in these institutions;
- 3) "Free zone" universities, which comprise cross-border collaborations between local and international universities. Some are foreign branch campuses that operate as for-profit universities and rely heavily on tuition from students.

In the 1970s, students who wanted to continue their education after secondary school were needed to go overseas, either to neighboring Arab countries as well as to the United States or the United Kingdom, with government help (Findlow, 2005). Nowadays, the sector provides three public higher education institutions that are owned and controlled by the federal government: United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), founded in 1977, Higher Colleges of Technology, established in 1988, and Zayed University, founded in 1998. There are also two further specialised federal higher education institutions: the National Defense College and the Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy (Wilkins, 2019). It was the first time when all UAE residents had access to free public higher education (Gaad, 2001). Five federal public higher education institutions in the UAE are noted in Table 1.

The title "public" (or federal) institution only applies to higher education institutions associated with the UAE Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, which provide tuition-free education to UAE natives and a small number of expats (Hijazi et.al, 2008).

The United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) was founded in 1976 by the government of the United Arab Emirates. As a consequence, next year, the institution opened its doors to the general public. In

1977, there were only 535 students who attended, but after ten years, the number of students rose to 2,532. In 1990, the institution had in total 7,947 students enrolled. (Khlaifat, 1992).

According to Sheila (2009) arts and science, education, administration, and political science were among the first courses offered in the UAEU. Awarded Bachelor’s degrees were roughly equivalent to those awarded in other developed countries. This was originally a male-only campus, but later

a female-only campus was added. UAEU offers Arabic-medium education for free (no tuition or book costs), as well as free transportation, food, and housing. She maintains that the desire to be inclusive, as in most other new nation-states, meant that higher education was made open to all residents who had finished secondary school. All new graduates were promised a position in the new infrastructure – government departments – in the early days.

Table 1 – Federal universities of the UAE

Name	Year established	About the universities
UAE University	1977	It offers a variety of undergraduate and graduate degrees, with many of its programs being globally approved. UAEU was placed in the top 5% of institutions worldwide, and among the top research universities in the Gulf and Arab world. (Source: The United Arab Emirates’ Government portal; accessed 16.04.2022)
Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT)	1988	With 23,000 students enrolled over 16 campuses, it is the UAE’s biggest applied higher educational university. It provides over 70 academic programs as well as professional certifications from internationally recognized organizations. (Source: The United Arab Emirates’ Government portal; access 2022)
Zayed University	1998	It began as a female institute, but lately opened a campus for men. ZU is accredited in the United States in 2008, demonstrating its excellent standards. (Source: The United Arab Emirates’ Government portal; access 2022)
National Defense College	2012	It is competent to prepare and qualify military and civilian commanders and raise their capacities to identify and assess national, regional and international security challenges and understand the foundations and requirements for the management and utilization of the UAE resources in order to protect national interests (Source: website of “Nation Shield” armed forces journal; in Arabic; accessed 16.04.2022)
Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy	2014	The Academy was established to become the driving force for the country’s efforts to educate, inform and qualify the UAE’s current and future diplomats and government leaders (Source: Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy’s website, accessed 16.04.2022)

Findlow (2005) remarks that in the beginning, as the UAE began to modernize its education system, it sought the help of Egypt for educational advice and personnel. The Egyptian influence is regarded as the dominant impact at the UAEU in terms of staffing and management at the university level. Egyptian teachers formed 46.5 percent of PhD-holding academics in 1970s and 1980s, with Iraqis making for around 15 percent. In the mid-1990s, 50 percent of the professors stated that their highest degree was earned in an Egyptian university. Moreover, the top administration has had a large number of Egyptians among the University’s staff. The table 2 below demonstrates the non-citizens’ ratio in UAEU among academic staff in academic year 2008-2009 (Maytha, 2014).

Table 2 – non-nationals of the UAEU’s academic staff.

Faculty members	74%
Instructors	98%
Lecturers	100%
Teaching Assistants	0%
Non Academic Staff	76%

(Source: Maytha, 2014)

From late 1970s until 1990s, the UAE started formal partnership globally. Consultants from UK, USA, Canada, Australia and France played a significant role in reshaping higher education in the UAE. Institutions such as the Higher Colleges of Technol-

ogy (HCT) and Zayed University (ZU) were specifically established to meet the highest standards required for a federal higher education institution (Findlow, 2005). The States' desire to "modernize" higher education systems and the growing demand for internationally recognized undergraduate, post-graduate programs has led to a rapid expansion of the higher education sector and establishing extensive international partnerships with foreign universities across the UAE (Nizar, 2018).

Due to the high demand for university admissions among UAE women, a new federally funded academic university, Zayed University, opened in 1998. This was a women-only institution with two campuses in Dubai and Abu Dhabi that follows an English-medium, American liberal-arts curriculum and a predominantly American academic staff (Sheila, 2009).

Many UAE universities have established high-profile collaborations with major foreign higher education institutions, including funding and real involvement in the curriculum (Findlow, 2005). These agreements have shown to be tremendously beneficial to federal institutions in terms of improving quality, exchange knowledge, and introducing new technology and approaches. Many of the HCT and UAEU's programs, for example, have been accredited by universities and organizations in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. HCT students are able to expand their university experience by receiving short-term scholarships and

visiting opportunities from HCT-collaborated tertiary educational institutions abroad. These agreements assist tertiary educational institutions in maintaining and improving quality, as well as improving students' international professional skills (Baburjan, 2011). Accreditation is seen as a rapid approach to receive a high-quality education equivalent to that available in the United States (Findlow, 2005).

The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MOHESR) was established in 1992 with the specific mandate of making higher education policy (Sheila, 2009). It was in charge of the overall planning of higher education and scientific research in the UAE; licencing private institutions of higher education, accrediting their programmes, and supervising them to ensure quality standards within the context of the master plan of higher education; and designing proposed legislation for the creation of federal governmental higher education institutions and scientific research (Maytha, 2014). In the mid-1990s, the UAE Ministry of Higher Education introduced a Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA), which licences and accredits foreign educational institutions. The Commission's role is to ensure that private academic and technical higher education providers are of the highest possible quality and of international prestige (Sheila, 2009). Since then, the number of accredited academic institutions has increased rapidly over the last 20 years, rising from 5 in 1990 to 74 (Figure 1) in 2020 (CAA, 2022).



Figure 1 – CAA-licensed institutions of tertiary education in the UAE between 2000 and 2020 (Source: Fact book 2019 – 2020, Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA), accessed 15.04.2022)

A significant public and private investment has resulted in a tremendous expansion of the higher education sector, which now includes a diverse range of programs offered by a large number of public and private colleges and universities (Hijazi et al. 2008). Lefrere (2007) argued that the recorded boom in higher education is not only owing to UAE's fast rising population, but also due to better higher education opportunities. For example, between 2001 and 2005, the number of graduates went up by 102%, while the number of people aged 20 to 24 increased by 94% in the UAE. This increase in higher education possibilities is being driven by the UAE's rapid economic expansion and the private sector's rising investments in higher education institutions throughout the Gulf region. Since colleges and universities are obliged to compete by enhancing their academic programs and the employability of their graduates, the growing number of higher education providers should have a beneficial influence on higher education quality.

International higher educational campuses in the UAE

The UAE, as Becker (2009) believes, is transforming its economy from oil-based to knowledge and services oriented. This requires significant investments in order to build the necessary infrastructure and attract companies from the region and beyond. To sustain the increasing knowledge economy, it is critical to have trained and professional workforce. Three emirates (Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Ras al Khaimah) are now recruiting foreign universities, faculty, students, and knowledge companies in an effort to establish the UAE as the leading education hub in the Gulf region. The UAE had the most international branch campuses of any country in the world in 2009. Despite the fact that it has 40 branch campuses, enrolment is rather limited, and hence the UAE does not have a significant overall number of international students.

The United Arab Emirates is home to the most foreign degree providers in the world, making it one of several emerging epicenters or "hubs" of international tertiary institutions (Knight, 2011). With 40 international branch campuses, it is clearly the leader, representing about 25% of all international branch campuses worldwide (Becker, 2009).

Private higher education institutions in the UAE are required to be licensed by the CAA and then have each of its programs individually accredited, as mentioned previously. There are, however, several free zones in the UAE where CAA accreditation

is not mandatory (Wilkins, 2011). Dubai Knowledge Village (DKV), established in 2002, is one of them. It was the world's first academic free zone, with member institutions freed from taxation, customs charges, limits on repatriation of cash, as well as other regulations applicable to the UAE proper. (Verbik and Merkley, 2006). Its purpose is to promote the development of national human capital. DKV is the physical location where "soft infrastructure" services such as business, legal, and information technology are offered, all within a "free zone" where firms are generally exempt from some labor and administrative requirements. Created opportunities were intended to stimulate the establishment of firm branch offices as well as campuses of foreign higher education and training institutes, which would thereafter supply services in Dubai. Organizations in the Village are anticipated to recruit from the UAE and give training in knowledge-based skills, with the ultimate goal of increasing the capacity to deliver the required human capital from the local population.

Gonzalez et al. (2008) clarifies that coming foreign institutions in DKV work with no government funding on a fully private basis. They take a financial risk by establishing business in the Village, as there is no certainty that fees would cover their expenses.

Dubai International Academic City (DIAC) is the UAE government's second initiative. This area is home to two-thirds of all international campuses in the UAE. DIAC was founded in 2007 to be a more prominent successor to DKV, the emirate's initial hub. All foreign branch campuses at DKV were relocated to DIAC in 2010, when DKV was operated to provide corporate training and services (Becker, 2009).

DIAC and DKV are owned and sponsored by TECOM Investments, a branch of Dubai Holdings. TECOM Investments' aim is to build and run company clusters that contribute to the global development of knowledge-based industries. DKV is host to business partners who specialize in short-term training and professional development for private organizations. As a part of the education business cluster, DIAC is hub to more than 25 foreign institutions of higher learning. The hub provides academic programs such as engineering, computer science, finance, media, fashion and design, biotechnology, environmental studies, quality management, and business management degrees that range in length from one to four years. In 2008, total student numbers were expected to be 11,000 from 102 nationalities, which indicates that most DIAC "tenant"

universities have low enrolment rates. This can be attributed to the financial crisis that began the earlier year. However, the number of universities catering to students from the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia is expected to increase in the future (Knight, 2011).

The majority of 'international higher education centers' provide especially favorable conditions for foreign branch campuses. DIAC, for example, provides overseas campuses with 100 percent foreign ownership, 100 percent tax exemption, and 100 percent profit repatriation. DIAC, on the other hand, attempts to 'push out' a less notable higher education institution in order to attract prestigious ones. In addition to tax exemptions, the Ras Al Khaimah Free Trade Zone provides administrative support, such as aid with visa applications for branch campus workers. In compared to Dubai and Ras Al Khaimah, Abu Dhabi authorities have committed significant funds to overseas campuses, but they have also taken a more cautious and unique approach (Becker, 2009).

Becker offers (2009) several reasons why the UAE is attractive to foreign providers:

- One of the most stable "pro-Western" countries in the Middle East,
- Rapidly increasing national populations in the Middle East,
- Women are encouraged to pursue higher education, but for cultural reasons, they are unlikely to study abroad. As a result, female students are eager to enroll in local universities, as well as international branch campuses,
- There was a high demand for US-style higher education in the Middle East in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 (rather than at campuses in the US), and
- Excluded from regional public universities expatriate communities make up 50-80 percent of the population in the Gulf countries. Mostly, the private sector is their only option for furthering their education.

Moreover, the absence of intrusive regulations, taxes, and bureaucratic interventions is what attracts people to the zones, and it has resulted in a new level of emirate-federal government relations and procedures (Fox and Al Shamisi, 2014).

These international higher education hubs provide the government with a number of advantages:

1) The Gulf States have begun labour market nationalisation programmes, named "Emiritization" in the United Arab Emirates (Wilkins, 2011). The UAE has been able to achieve labour force nationalization objectives in some sectors, such as commercial banking, and make significant progress in others, such as insurance, human resource manage-

ment, tourism, and hospitality. This all is due to the provision of programmes by foreign universities that match the demands of private sector business and industry (Mashood, et al, 2009).

2) Due to a lack of higher education capacity in the Gulf States, thousands of students have studied at colleges all around the world each year. The majority have emigrated to the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, or other Arab countries outside the Gulf region. More locals have chosen to study at home since foreign branch campuses have been built in the Gulf States. For example, about one-third of the UAE national undergraduate students studying in the UAE attend a private university rather than one of the three federal universities, and the number of students attending private institutions in Dubai actually outnumbers those attending federal higher education institutions (Ahmed, 2010).

3) When international students come to the UAE to pursue higher education, they also want other goods and services, which helps the national economy. Foreign academic institutions that establish themselves in free zones such as DIAC raise revenue for the governments and organisations that own them in the form of rentals. DIAC rates are twice as costly per square foot as rentals in other major city areas (Wilkins, 2011).

Discussion and conclusion

On the basis of the above, we can draw a few conclusions based on current trends. First, a large number of international expats, significant government funding for education, and international partnerships with foreign universities have all contributed to the rapid expansion of international branch campuses. Second, international campuses can both benefit and diversify the local economy. That is why the UAE government is doing everything it can to attract foreign universities and is taking measures to do so. Third, we can deduce from Hawanini's international reach models that the UAE's universities have primarily used import and foreign-campus models. In the UAE, for example, there are many expat faculty members working in universities. Many academic personnel from other countries, in particular, are employed on international campuses. However, Hawanini did not propose accreditation of federal university programs as another measure of international reach. This, we believe, distinguishes the universities of the UAE. Finally, a wide range of international institutions can help to improve the quality of education in public universities, making them internationally competitive.

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