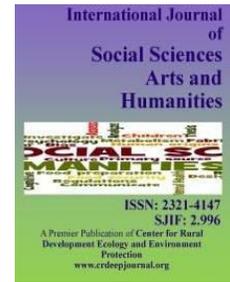


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Review Paper

Toward the Development of Higher Educational Policies in the UAE in the Era of Globalization: Abu-Dhabi University as a Model

Jassim AlQahtani

Master of Education Program—The British University in Dubai.

ARTICLE INFORMATION

ABSTRACT

Corresponding Author:
Jassim AlQahtani

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Recent studies on educational performance refers to the urgent need to rewrite the general framework, mission and objectives of the educational policies in the GCC countries particularly the UAE to clarify the important aspects and the actual pillars that establish the correlation between the inputs and outputs of the educational system in the era of globalization. The education-policy making process constitutes a central aspect in sustainable development in both developed and developing countries. Education policies play an effective role in creating an environment suitable for the age of technology and consumption of knowledge. Modernization and reform in the educational sector require an organized effort augmented by a solid educational policy, well-defined to foster technical development in the light of international expertise and the experiences of developed and developing countries. In this context, this research attempts to analyze the current educational policies in the higher education sector in UAE in order to monitor the developments of these policies and the potential challenges confronting the country in its pursuit to achieve sustainable development and localize technology, which became a priority of UAE educational and community leaders. The paper uses the university of Abu-Dhabi as a model of UAE higher education institutions which struggled to modernize their educational policies to keep abreast with the latest technical developments in the 21st century and come to grips with the requirements of the globalization era. Abu-Dhabi University is selected in this study because no similar research was previously performed on the university. As a whole, the paper is a multi-section study: The first part starts with an introduction about education policies in the globalization era. The second part explores higher education policies in the UAE and GCC Countries. The third part analyzes the factors of success for universities and higher education institutions in the twenty-first century and the fourth part examines the challenges confronting higher education policies in the UAE. The fifth part scrutinizes Abu Dhabi University as a model of private universities implementing educational policies which meet the requirements of the era of globalization and this part is followed by a conclusion. The paper is supplemented with an extensive and comprehensive appendix (Literature Review) covering the most important studies related to the argument of the research.

Education Policies in the Globalization Era: An Introduction

The era of globalization is witnessing a steady growth in the sectors of modern technology driven by unprecedented progress in scientific research, which requires increasing the level of student achievement. This new reality has created the need for a trained and educated labor force at the highest levels to cope with the development process that has spawned the economics of knowledge and the new economy. In this context, middle class individuals who aspire to be part of the new economy in the twenty-first century have to reach a level of education beyond the secondary certificate due to the disappearance of jobs that were

available during the twentieth century which required a level of education less than secondary school. In the 21st century, high technology sectors have imposed high quality and efficiency requirements and standards that require a different quality of education and require a wide-ranging development in the educational policies.

In the 21st century, educational institutions seek to work according to strict, developed and relevant economic standards. They also seek to attract an excellent teaching staff, design complementary curricula, provide international expertise and a multicultural environment to their students, and pursue

accreditation and quality improvement in order to provide university education with greater opportunities necessary for the development of international relations and cross-cultural cooperation. Thus, one of the key issues of concern to 21st-century education policy makers is how to enhance student participation, develop student innovation and improve academic quality. They also work towards the endorsement of collaborative applied research, curricula development, entrepreneurship, promptness and responsiveness to community needs with an emphasis on knowledge-based learning. In a related context, this study emphasizes the increasing role of globalized technologies in the development of higher education during the 21st century. Educational institutions must adopt innovative solutions aimed at changing the way students learn, enhance their research output and develop their methods of study and achievement inside and outside the university. Within the framework of educational policy orientations in the 21st century, educational institutions worldwide will seek to prepare students to become the next generation of productive staff and creative leaders of the new knowledge-based economy.

Apparently, the competitive economic conditions currently associated with advances in ICT in countries such as the United States, Japan and Europe have created a need for fundamental changes in educational policies for higher education as universities in these countries have become more competitive in developing human talents by teaching more students using ultra-sophisticated methods with increased access to low-income students taking into consideration the rapid development of entrepreneurship innovation and cost-effectiveness. Current educational policy trends are shifting from education to student learning, from research to innovation, and from the provision of individualized educational service to the involvement of society. Maryam Lootah (2011) states that there is a growing need for cooperation between education policymakers in terms of the stages of education, from the kindergarten to the twelfth grade, in order to effectively move towards higher education.

One of the current trends in education policy is to seek a synergy between higher education and economic development with a greater focus on enhancing the employability of students and an increasing attention to labor market requirements and workforce development. These advanced educational policies have made educational and academic institutions more dynamic, innovative and more responsive to the requirements of the labor market.

Some developing countries, such as China and India, are investing heavily in educational, academic and economic development. The number of university degree holders in China reached 50 million graduates in 2001. By 2008, the number of university students had risen to 90 million students while China's GDP doubled and was expected to reach 60 trillion dollars by 2020. Thanks to the support of the educational development sectors, China became increasingly competitive in the global market and its share of the world market is rising steadily. There is a similar trend to develop educational sectors currently in India, Singapore, Korea and many Southeast Asian countries.

Higher Education Policies in UAE and the GCC Countries

GCC countries are investing heavily in the development of educational policies with focus on higher education. AlBanna

(1990) demonstrates that the main triggers of higher education development in the GCC include the needs to diversify the economy and reduce dependence on oil and gas. Over one million students have enrolled in higher education in the GCC during 2009-2010. In 2010 Saudi Arabia allocated \$ 36.7 billion to the education sector equivalent to 25% of its budget while the United Arab Emirates allocated \$ 9.8 billion in the same year equivalent to 22.5% of its budget. It is noted that the United States allocated 13% of its budget to the education sector (see website no. 1 in the works-cited). The total number of higher education institutions in the GCC countries was 200 in 2010. There are more than 100 higher education institutions in the UAE, three of which are federal, and the rest are private. In 2010, UAE nationals constituted 11% of a total number of 91,200 students enrolled in higher education institutions at that time. The federal institutions serve about 40 thousand students, 40% of the total number of students, the majority of them are UAE citizens, while private educational institutions serve 60 thousand students, 60% of the total number of registered students of both expatriates and UAE citizens (see website no.2).

Reform of higher education as, Ajawi (1991) argues, will continue to be a key priority for GCC governments and an important factor for economic diversification and private sector growth. At the same time, higher education, in the perspective of Gibbons (1998) will remain an effective strategy for the development of a middle class with the potential for growth and continuity, the promotion of gender equality and an effective instrument of economic empowerment that will directly contribute to GDP growth. On the other hand, GCC governments are expected to increase their emphasis on accountability, cost-effectiveness and evaluation of results to justify the growing investment in tertiary education in these countries. GCC academic institutions are expected to be evaluated according to international standards of quality and academic costs. For example, Singapore spends less per student than most GCC countries but Singapore in the view of Atlbach and Peterson (1999) is one of the pioneers in higher education worldwide.

Factors of Success for Higher Education Institutions in the Twenty-First Century

- The success of universities in the 21st century depends heavily on their ability to meet the following challenges effectively:
- Ensuring access to more students and better education for them.
- Adopting rigorous and high academic standards and consolidating connections to the economy.
- Developing international standards and begin to improve academic quality on an ongoing basis.
- Encouraging the creation of applied knowledge and research in collaboration with national institutions and the international community and providing higher education opportunities integral to international relations and cooperation (Wilen-Daugenti, 2008).
- Creating a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship among students and faculty.
- Exercising vital skills and responding to societal needs
- Developing strategic relationships with the economy and employability of students.
- Comprehending and absorbing the latest developments in communications and information technology.

- Attracting and retaining qualified teaching staff and creative management teams.
- Establishing educational centers and creating innovative learning methods.
- Participating actively in national and regional economic development.
- Achieving success in an environment based on competition and cooperation

In the same vein, successful universities in the 21st century are expected to provide innovative programs with excellent teaching staff and provide students with an international experience and multicultural environment (Williams, 1986). Universities should not only make changes regularly to maintain competition but must also seek academic accreditation, continuous quality improvement and a constant commitment to excellence and innovation (Wilén-Daugenti, 2007).

Challenges of Higher Education Policies in the United Arab Emirates

Federal and private higher education institutions in the UAE face a number of challenges that affect their competitive advantages.

These challenges include the following:

- Facing strong competition on the domestic market.
- Containing the differences between educational costs and tuition fees.
- Obtaining financial support for investment in national capacity-building.
- Gaining support for funding financial aid for students.
- Getting equal access to government resources.
- Seeking the diversification of external financing sources.
- Keeping pace with the demand for increased flexibility and adaptability in order to remain in an internationally competitive market.

Abu Dhabi University as a Model of UAE Private Universities Implementing Educational Policies which Fulfill the Requirements of the Globalization Era

Abu Dhabi University was established in 2003 as a comprehensive and exemplary private institution for higher education in the 21st century. For the past ten years, Abu Dhabi University was growing as a national university committed to social development and the creation of a knowledge-based economy in the United Arab Emirates. The following analysis provides an overview of the success story of Abu Dhabi University as an example of a private university making every effort to achieve new high degrees of academic prominence in the UAE.

Abu Dhabi University Guidelines

The following points and details about Abu-Dhabi University are taken by the researcher from the University records and manuals. These details explain the guidelines governing all academic and administrative decisions at Abu Dhabi University as follows:

- Commitment to National Capacity Building and Abu Dhabi Vision 2010
- Adherence to international standards of academic quality.
- Development of a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Enhancement of promptness and responsiveness to changing needs.

- Establishment of close relations with the labor market and employment.
- Increase of emphasis on strategic research and higher education.

Abu Dhabi University Strategy

Abu Dhabi University developed its first strategic plan in 2008 based on a common vision, focusing on achievable goals, building an institutional culture, developing efficient human capital, developing team spirit, and commitment to institutional quality and effective leadership.

Abu Dhabi University Strategic Goals

Abu-Dhabi University strategic goals may be summarized as follows:

- Abu-Dhabi University is a national higher education institution, which represents an option for higher quality education.
- Abu-Dhabi University endorsed applied research leading regional economic development.
- Abu-Dhabi University aims to create a learning environment that focuses on the students and leading to their development culturally and personally.
- Abu-Dhabi University aims to achieve academic excellence at all levels.
- Abu-Dhabi University aims to strengthen the culture of employee evaluation and create an environment that stimulates innovation and professional excellence of faculty and staff.
- Abu-Dhabi University aims to become a sustainable financial center with the continued ability to invest in growth and seek the pursuit of excellence.

Advantages of Education at Abu Dhabi University

Education at Abu Dhabi University is characterized by the following:

- Abu-Dhabi University endorses Education which is globally competitive in the 21st century.
- Abu-Dhabi University endorses Education which preserves the national culture and identity.
- Abu-Dhabi University endorses Education is committed to building regional capacity for sustainable development.
- Abu-Dhabi University endorses Education which aims to establish a relationship between graduates and rewarding Abu-Dhabi University endorses Education of world renown.

Abu Dhabi University's Impact on Society

Abu Dhabi University's two most important contributions to society are the development of the workforce and the building of intellectual capital. Most of Abu Dhabi University's academic programs are professional programs directly related to the needs of the workforce in government, industry and the institutional sector. Abu Dhabi University is working closely with employers, partners and stakeholders to prepare highly qualified graduates to serve the needs of the workforce in the new economy in the era of globalization. At the same time, faculty members and fellow researchers at the university are actively involved in creating an intellectual capital that will help develop the small and medium-sized companies necessary to create new jobs and develop a sustainable national wealth.

Educational Trends and Guidelines at Abu Dhabi University

It is important to emphasize that the process of education at Abu Dhabi University is a process of continuous change and evolution which adopts the latest strategies for progress in teaching and learning. The three most important contributions of the university in this respect are as follows:

- Shifting from focus on education to focusing on learning.
- Shifting from focusing on research to focusing on innovation.
- Shifting from focusing on service to focusing on social responsibility

Research Areas at Abu Dhabi University

The following is a brief overview of the most important ten years of research at the University of Abu Dhabi that supports the strategic objectives of the University and the GCC region:

- Development of solar and renewable energy and energy efficiency.
- Development of earth observation and remote sensing.

Number of students per semester

- Enhancement of simulation, design and visualization.
- Development of water desalination.
- Strengthening of private education.
- Strengthening of public health.
- Strengthening of logistics and transportation services.
- Strengthening of microelectronic industries.
- Strengthening of ICTs.
- Promotion of innovation and entrepreneurship.

Achievements of Abu Dhabi University

Over a period of only seven years, Abu Dhabi University has achieved significant institutional achievements at the academic and administrative levels. Examples of these achievements include the following:

The steady growth in the number of enrolled students to reach 4000 students in 2010 as shown in Figure 1. In addition, the university attracted 138 faculty members and 170 specialized staff. Figure 1 shows the growth in the number of students enrolled at Abu Dhabi University

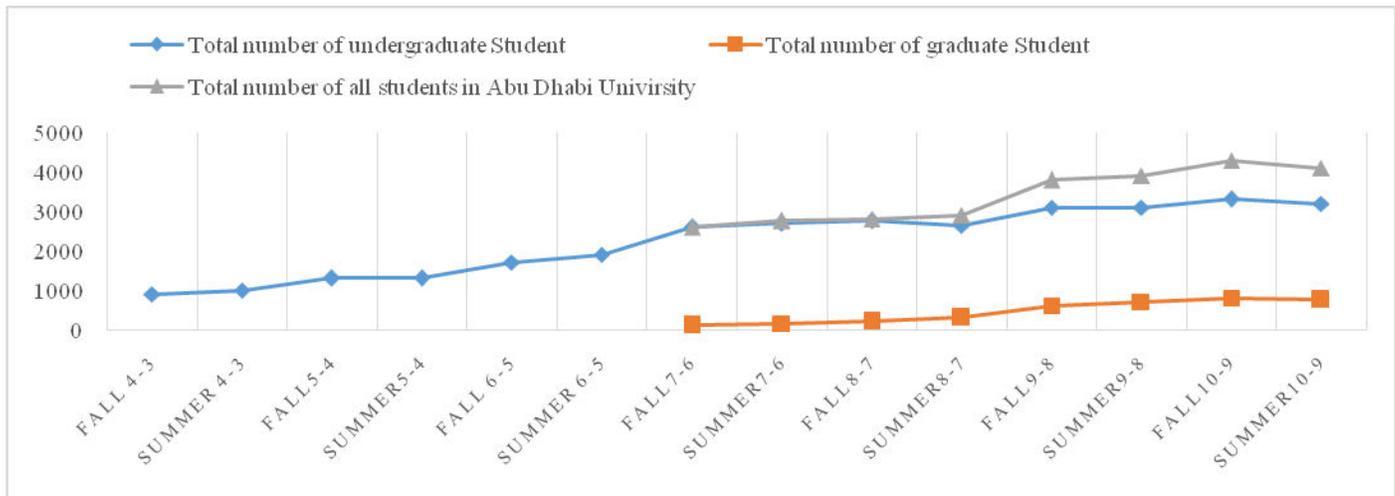


Fig 1. Growth in the number of students enrolled at Abu Dhabi University

While Abu Dhabi University has maintained its student growth rates, it has succeeded in attracting new high-

quality students from secondary schools as shown in Figure 2.

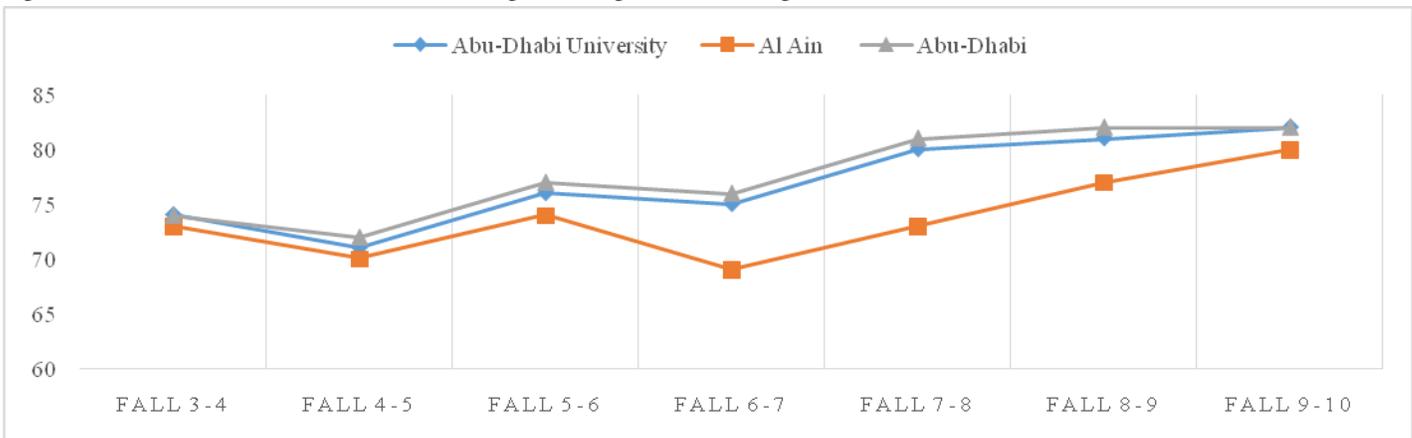


Fig 2. The academic quality trajectories for new students at Abu Dhabi University.

In an effort to achieve institutional and organizational effectiveness, Abu Dhabi University has paid special attention to the development of leadership skills among top and middle

managers and has formed an excellent team of senior leaders. Moreover, the University of Abu Dhabi was awarded ISO certification in 2009. Significant improvement has been achieved

in the areas of student participation, networking and university life, resulting in a consistent improvement in student satisfaction and student retention rates. I related scenario, The Abu Dhabi University chancellor's Innovation Awards were launched in 2009 with annual competitions between students, faculty and staff to foster a culture of creative thinking, problem solving and teamwork. One of the highlights of Abu Dhabi University's success is its ability to place 94% of its graduates in competitive

working positions within six months of graduating. Another important achievement is the University's ability to attract major external funding for research grants and contracts. By 2018, the University has graduated over 4,000 students and succeeded in establishing the Abu Dhabi University Graduates Association. The number of successfully accredited new undergraduate and graduate programs increased from seven in 2004 to 30 in 2010 (see Figure 3).

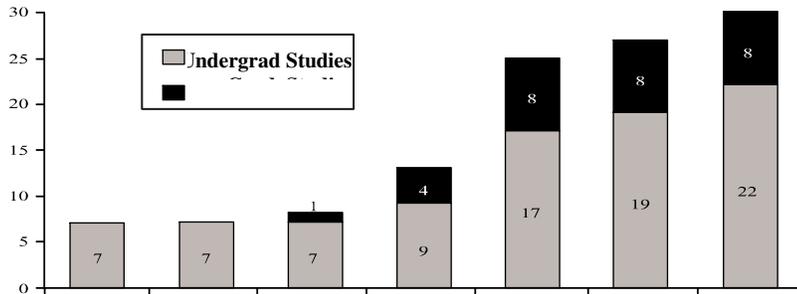


Fig 3. Growth in academic programs at Abu Dhabi University

In 2010, Abu Dhabi University developed the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (How to Start Your Business?). The university is currently developing a business incubator to support the development of small and medium-sized enterprises. One of the major achievements of the university in 2009 included its success in establishing the Institute for Faculty Development and Planning.

Figure 4 shows an important milestone in the development of the University of Abu Dhabi starting with obtaining the license and accreditation of the UAE Ministry of Higher Education and the adoption of all programs from 2004 to 2010 and work on the development of its strategic plan for 2008. Accordingly the university was awarded the ISO certification in 2009 and the Sheikh Khalifa Excellence Award in 2011 in addition to academic accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in 2014.

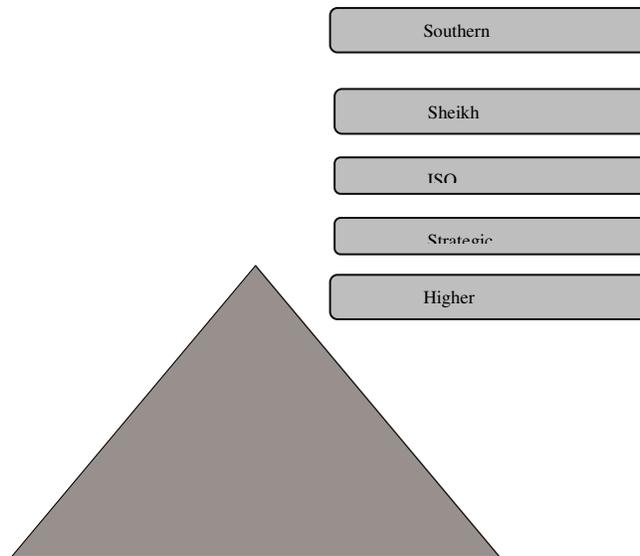


Fig 4. Progress of Abu Dhabi University

Conclusion

In the 21st century, educational technology plays an increasing role in higher education. Universities and higher education institutions become more competitive and adopt innovative solutions that will change the way students learn, communicate, collaborate and study within and outside the campus. By familiarizing these institutions with the new requirements of the globalization era and by endorsing sophisticated educational policies suitable to the needs of 21st century knowledge economy, Universities and higher education institutions will be able to

prepare students to become the next generation of productive employees and creative leaders the world needs. Thereupon, the need to reform and develop robust educational policies lies in the formulation of the role played by the environment of education such as home, school, mosque and society, and the contents of the curriculum disseminated through the implementation of robust education policies in the era of globalization. On this basis, self-learning and the continuous mastery of the skills of the learners required the update of curricula and methods of education as well as the evaluation and establishment of an e-learning culture to

develop the level of technologies and communications and enhance the new technological skills on the part of the teacher and the learner as mentioned above.

Education as a system does not carry the responsibility for the recurrent failures characterizing it particularly in the Arab world. Education is merely a system, which interacts with a network of other systems operating in the society. However, education is supposed to lead the caravan of progress in the era of globalization where knowledge economy, artificial intelligence, and cutting-edge technology are integral to the desired development. Currently, there is consensus that high-level education feeds the labor market with capable and qualified human cadres with high quality skills and knowledge, which improves production, increases productivity in global markets. Educational policies in the 21st century should cope-up with the requirements of the globalization era where educational policies are supposed to be examined and evaluated continuously in order to monitor the extent to which they adhere to the current requirements while emphasizing the connection between educational policies and other emerging issues. The successful experiences of developed and developing countries in the field of educational development and investment in human capital through which these countries have managed to occupy significant positions on the global map of achievements should be taken into consideration.

The contributions of countries, which integrate modern technology and technological industry in their educational systems and the achievements of countries, which succeed in transforming the outcomes of their educational systems into profitable products and trade in the era of information technology to generate knowledge management and safe investments, should be emulated. Explicitly, the need to reform and develop robust educational policies lies not only in the implementation of sophisticated education policies but also in the re- formulation of the role played by the environment of education such as home, school, mosque and society, and the contents of the curriculum disseminated through the philosophy of education in the era of globalization. On this basis, self-learning and the continuous mastery of the skills of the learners required the update of curricula and methods of education as well as the evaluation and establishment of an e-learning culture to develop the level of technologies and communications and enhance the new technological skills on the part of the teacher and the learner.

Recent studies on educational performance refers to the urgent need to rewrite the general framework, mission and objectives of higher education policies to clarify the important aspects that establish the correlation between the inputs and outputs of the educational system in the era of globalization. The education-policy making process constitutes a central aspect in sustainable development and education policies play an effective role in creating an environment suitable for the age of technology and consumption of knowledge. Modernization and reform in the educational sector requires an organized effort augmented by a solid educational policy, well-defined to foster technical development in the light of international expertise and the experiences of developed and developing countries. In this context, this paper attempts to analyze the current higher education policies in the UAE using Abu-Dhabi University as a model in order to identify these policies and monitor the potential challenges confronting the country in its pursuit to achieve

sustainable development and localize technology, which became a priority of UAE educational and community leaders.

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