

SUMMARY OF MASTERS THESIS

Title: Internationalization in Lebanese Universities; Rationales, Strategies and Challenges

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This study has been conducted in the framework of an internship at the National Tempus Office in Beirut with the support of the Higher Education Reform Experts team.

Introduction

Higher education in Lebanon has acquired an internationalized nature since the 1830's with the establishment of the first universities by French and American missionaries and has evolved in this perspective till today. Furthermore, the Lebanese Diaspora that has started since early years has resulted in a multinational composition of the Lebanese people at home and abroad. At the same time, the diverse and open cultural backgrounds in Lebanon and the autonomy that universities in Lebanon enjoy have attracted many foreign higher education students and many foreign institutions to spread in the Lebanese territory. Hence, internationalization of higher education in Lebanon has evolved naturally and has been a historical process highly controlled by foreign countries and by supranational organizations with the Lebanese state playing a minor passive role in this process. And this rather undisciplined unplanned process has promoted higher education in Lebanon and allowed it to step out as an advanced country in the region. In recent years, with the increased planning and funding of higher education internationalization in the neighboring countries, and with the relatively stagnant position of Lebanon in this field, concerns grow concerning the position Lebanon enjoyed and the competition it is facing.

Given the loose relationship existing between the Lebanese government and the universities, the low level of interference of the state with university governance, and the absence of a national regulative framework regulating university procedures, the individual institutional endeavors gain importance as

they form the main driving force behind all internationalization measures of higher education in Lebanon. Furthermore, the somehow unique composition and history of the Lebanese higher education, the lack of resources available for higher education, the wide Lebanese Diaspora, and the rich multicultural society prevailing in Lebanon brings a new set of rationales for institutions to adopt internationalization.

In the light of what was discussed above, this thesis aims to identify the institutional rationales for internationalizing HE and determine whether universities follow a specific strategy for this process or whether internationalization is a haphazard unplanned occurrence. This study has been conducted in the framework of an internship at the National Tempus Office in Beirut with the support of the Higher Education Reform Experts team.

2. Methodology and Data Analysis

The data collection methodology adopted in this study includes both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative approach is based on a questionnaire inspired by that of the IAU and on a thorough analysis of the university catalogues 2010/2011 and their corresponding websites. The qualitative approach is based on interviews with specific persons who were willing to be interviewed in the universities, in addition to extensive literature review. Universities that have been covered in this study are those among the 31 universities mentioned in the website of the Lebanese Ministry of Higher Education. The questionnaire has been distributed to 19 universities. Among them, 12 have returned the questionnaire. The catalogues of 25 universities have been analyzed. The 6 remaining universities had either no catalogue available online, or the information provided was not sufficient to draw any conclusions as had been done with the other universities. Websites of 27 universities have been analyzed. The remaining four either had their websites unavailable, under construction or offering insufficient information. Five interviews have been conducted with the following individuals; the vice president for Planning and Educational Research and the University of Balamand, the president of the AUCE university, the Dean of the faculty of Business administration at the Manar university, the International Office director at NDU, and finally the Dean of the faculty of Sciences and humanities at ULF. International literature about internationalizing higher education has been reviewed to support the data collection procedure. Unfortunately, formal statistics and research paper about the Lebanese higher education are very rare and liable sources that can be trusted in the data collection are restricted to some international organizations, or some rare national institutions.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Definition

The various definitions of “internationalization of education” could be divided into three main categories; a state attained by higher education institutions, a random consequence that is not necessarily a planned result of a given process, or a well-planned procedure part of a national or an institutional strategy. For the purpose of this study, HE internationalization is a strategic process where the integration of an international perspective in all university functions is a rationale, a means and an end at the same time. Higher education internationalization is a means to achieve a desired state in education. Internationalizing education is way to reach other goals. This explains why it is considered as a rationale for many university processes. Furthermore, an internationalized higher education is a desired outcome by itself. In today’s global world, internationalization of education, as a means to reflect the composition of the real world, is regarded as a positive state that should be achieved per se irrespective of the multiple advantages that accompanies it

1.2. Rationales and Strategies

“Rationales are the driving force for why a country, sector or institution wants to address and invest in internationalization.” (Knight, 2006, p.14) Identifying the rationales for internationalization allows a better understanding of the strategies followed and a better assessment of the institutional procedures. Knight and De Wit (Knight and de Wit, 1995) have classified the incentives behind internationalization of HEI into four main categories; economic, political, social/cultural and academic.

Based on different rationales, it is possible to recognize four approaches to internationalization and shape accordingly a suitable strategy. The first approach is the capacity building approach based on rationales of meeting HE demand, enhancing local human capacity and developing local HE systems. The second is the mutual understanding approach with academic, economic, social and cultural rationales. Third, rationales that regard internationalization as additional income and HE as an exporting industry are related to the revenue generation approach. The last is the skilled migration approach whose rationales are to attract world elite students and staff and enhance competitiveness of own institutions (OECD, 2004). As for the possible strategies, Davies (Davies, 1995) divides universities into four different quadrants resulting in a matrix made of two dimensions. On one hand, universities can be at any point on a range where internationalization is ad hoc or systematic. On the other hand, internationalization can be marginal or central to all university activities. As for the second dimension, internationalization is considered by some to be a set of marginal activities with low profile in missions and budgeting. In other universities, it is central to all other aspects and functions.

1.3. Elements of HEI

To identify what strategies are followed by universities to internationalize their education, it is important to consider every aspect of HEI and find how they best fit into strategies and approaches reviewed above. Hence, indicators have been collected about the university faculty, students, curricula, resources, partnerships and agreements, and governance.

a) “Faculty stimulates student interest in the field of internationalization and generally serves as a catalyst for the overall internationalization of the institution.” (Carter, 1992 page 41) Knight (Knight, 2005) states some basic strategies to form an internationalized faculty. These include the recruitment procedures that value international expertise, reward systems that motivate staff contributions, professional development activities, and encouragement of staff participation in international activities

b) Students form the largest population of any higher education institution and as the main consumers of the educational services; their geographical mobility holds benefits for the individual student as well as for the whole institution. Developing recruitment processes, facilitating student access and enhancing campus climate for international students are all means to ensure successful student mobility.. (Hahn and Teichler, 2005, Kehm, 2003, Lenn,2002)

c) The curriculum allows an international approach to teaching and learning that goes beyond mobility and strengthens international competences in students. (Kehm, 2003) It gives an equitable opportunity for all students to get an international exposure and is not restricted to those who can financially afford education abroad. (Kehm and Teichler, 2007) It can become international by delivering courses in several languages notably English, by integrating new courses and subjects, by reforming the teaching process itself or through university cooperation and agreements. (Harari, 1992)

d) Furthermore, adequate funding should be allocated for internationalization to succeed. These include human resources, physical resources mainly information and communication technology and appropriate infrastructure for both local and foreign students. The international office (IO) is considered as a particular resource. “ An international office or positions with experienced personnel to provide advisory, coordination and communication support is of key importance ... to serve in a catalytic ,supportive, service oriented way.” (Knight and De Wit, 1995, Page 10)

e) Partnerships and cooperation agreements between institutions from different countries are among the main aspects of education internationalization. However, it is falsely believed that the greater number of agreements a university signs with foreign partners, the more internationalized it becomes. Effective partnerships depend on adequate resources, construction and implementation of well written contracts, and development of explicit QA and teaching/learning strategies. (Davis et al, 2000)

f) In many countries, HE is under the responsibility of the national government that regulates it, funds it and monitors all aspects of HE provision. Yet, in other countries, institutions are granted more autonomy. Whether it is the state or the institution that is the main governing body, effective governance at an institution wide level can ensure coherence and strategic alignment for all international activities. Knight (Knight, 2005) recognizes that the effective governance of HE internationalization is related to the level of the commitment of seniors, the involvement of faculty and staff, the rationale for internationalization and the recognition of the international dimension in management, policy, and mission.

1.4. Higher Education in Lebanon

Before discussing internationalization of universities in Lebanon, it is important to understand the migratory activity of the Lebanese who have known emigration since the Phoenicians famous for their exploratory expeditions. The successive wars on Lebanon have pushed hundreds of thousands of Lebanese to leave their country. Today, it is approximated that there are four times as many Lebanese abroad than those living in Lebanon. On the other hand, Lebanon has hosted throughout history thousands of refugees and asylum seekers. This explains that Lebanon has always been an open country with a continuous migration flow; consequently it is by nature multicultural in terms of spoken languages, nationality and religions of its.

Lebanon is the only Middle Eastern country where the private sector has more student enrolment than the public sector. This is due to the fact that all the education institutions had been established by foreign religious missions and the government was a latecomer in providing public education. Consequently, the Lebanese private schooling system is the product of Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Islamic, Russian, German, French, British, Italian, American, Armenian and Arab missions. According to Baschour, the historical evolution of the higher education in Lebanon can be divided into three phases; the first phase (1850-1950) characterized by the establishment of universities by foreign missions, and the foreign interference in the Lebanese higher education, the second phase (1950-1975) characterized by the establishment of the Lebanese University as an attempt to create a balance between the national and foreign education institutions, and the last phase starting 1975, characterized by the fragmentation of the universities and by extreme chaos as a result of assaults on university infrastructure, faculty, and students throughout the civil war that started in 1975. (Haidar, 2001) Nowadays, the Lebanese HE is the oldest in the region, and includes 40 HE institutions divided as follows; 28 full universities including the only public university, 8 university institutes or colleges, and 4 religious university institutes.

2. Discussion

2.1. Rationales

According to universities, the main rationales behind internationalization are all academic rationales where internationalization is a means to improve local education. As a developing country, Lebanese higher education institutions are not self sufficient to meet the domestic needs in terms of education programs, staff, and equipment. The Lebanese universities try to cooperate with foreign universities to improve their programs and become more appealing to the students. Universities cannot benefit from knowledge produced locally since Lebanon lacks strong economy, industry and research. There is a need to get support from international more developed HE systems abroad in order to improve the quality of the local education provision. A further incentive is the religious affiliations of some universities which have encouraged international cooperation. Another issue is related to the number of Lebanese emigrants pushing for tighter bonds with their roots where international cooperation between universities is regarded as gathering Lebanese emigrants and reuniting them to their roots. These two last rationales can be classified as cultural/social rationales.

2.2. Staff and Faculty

Although many universities have considered the faculty members to be major actors in initiating international projects, it can be concluded that, apart from some incentives to motivate the staff and occasionally having foreign faculty to deliver workshops and courses, there is very little deliberate effort invested in internationalizing the staff. Universities in Lebanon do not adequately train their faculty to deal with international affairs and have no purpose to do so in the future. Even in their recruitment process, they do not actively seek internationally skilled personnel. This may be caused by the lack of serious incentives to motivate international faculty members despite the constant political instability. However, the faculty is international in terms of mastered languages, skills, degrees obtained, and mobility. The different languages taught in most schools since early years has resulted that most faculty members master at least one language other than Arabic. As for the international skills possessed by most faculty members, it can be explained by the general multicultural composition of the Lebanese society. Lebanese people thus naturally develop their knowledge and interest in global issues and other cultures. The scarceness of doctorate studies in Lebanon has pushed graduate students to pursue further education abroad, hence the high number of faculty which obtained their highest degree abroad. As for mobility, faculty members in many cases get funding from international organizations rather than from their institution to participate in international events. All these points show how the HE faculty in Lebanese university evolved naturally to become internationalized without any excessive effort and investment from universities.

2.3. Students and Mobility

Although Lebanon used to be a larger international students receiver in the past, its numbers has decreased considerably due to the civil war (Kritz, 2006). Syrian and Palestinian refugees make up a significant proportion of the total foreign student enrolment. Furthermore, Arab countries form a main origin of incoming students to Lebanon given that it had already two reputable foreign universities in the 1980's and was clearly ahead of the neighboring Arab countries in terms of foreign education. This is caused by the demand for American styled education (Jordan's Competitiveness Report, 2007). Another reason is the tension that started between the United States and the Muslims causing the United States to limit Arab students' acceptance to study in its universities and to apply tighter visa regulations on students from many Arab countries (U.S.-Muslim Engagement Project, 2008).

Lebanon has easy immigration policy for foreign students. Furthermore, because Lebanon is a heterogeneous country with a wide variety of cultural and religious backgrounds, it has many advantages over other countries in the region as a host country for Western students. The Lebanese society is well known for being tolerant, modern, and most importantly liberal and open. The Lebanese social life and climate play a positive role in attracting students too.

However, there are some drawbacks in the Lebanese higher education system which pushes many Lebanese students to migrate for education in European and American countries. Most importantly is the political and economic instability. Additionally, education in Lebanon is relatively expensive. Yet, universities are not as well equipped as European and American universities and a student does not have access to the most recent technologies and studies. Third, a further important factor that discourages students from studying in Lebanon is the weak appropriate job opportunities that are ensured upon the completion of the degree. Two main factors facilitate the Lebanese students' study abroad which is the trilingual fluency of the Lebanese students as well as the Lebanese presence all over the world where a student can always get support from relatives or friends residing abroad.

In relation to the literature review, the role of Lebanese HE institutions is discussed in the section below.

a) The recruitment process: Only some universities marketed their international activities internationally, but many of them marketed them regionally in the Gulf region, and very few offered scholarships for incoming foreign students. All universities, except those that have no website at all, have their websites available in at least one language other than Arabic. However, a small proportion of them have information specifically addressed to prospective foreign students. b) Student access; Lebanese universities are willing to recognize foreign students' previous studies since differences between education systems cannot be considered as major barriers in Lebanon given the different education styles and systems available. More than half of the universities that answered the questionnaire reported that

bureaucratic issues, visa regulations, recognition of previous study and comparability of degrees do not form major obstacles in student mobility. Concerning entrance requirements, the vast majority of universities have similar ones for foreign and local students and most of them offered the freshman program for foreign students. Around half of them recognized the scores of international tests such as TOEFL and SAT as entrance examinations. As for tuition fees, all of the universities have equal fees for all students although a few of them had lower application fees for foreign students and financially support international students unable to cover all tuition fees. c) All universities that answered the questionnaire expect only one, had foreign students and offered support and counseling for mobile students. However, most of them have no systems to encourage own students' mobility for a course or a semester abroad during the study years. The interviews conducted have helped in shedding light on some problems universities encounter with respect to students and their mobility. Universities consider a main obstacle the students' lack of preparation before going abroad to pursue their studies. The nature of the social life in Lebanon where a person lives with own parents till marriage makes it sometimes difficult for students to live on their own and take on responsibilities. Furthermore, students are not prepared to the type of interaction they should have with their professors abroad given that the relationship is different with Lebanese professors and the social interaction with the academic environment differs between cultures. This situation can be rectified through providing adequate counseling for own students willing to go abroad.

It can be deduced that universities in Lebanon generally have developed procedures in recruiting and accepting foreign students. Although most of their success in this field is the consequence of effort invested in the past and that had resulted in having some of the most reputable institutions in the region, universities in Lebanon are continuously working on improving their study structure to enhance comparability and recognition, and developing their recruitment process through some form of marketing through websites for example. Yet, no deliberate effort is invested to promote incoming and outgoing student mobility.

2.4. Curriculum

The literature reviewed in this paper has identified several ways to internationalize the curriculum; through the language of instruction, through adding courses with an international perspective, through study structures and resources, and through cooperating with institutions abroad to develop curricula and offer joint and double degrees. a) All the universities that answered the questionnaire except just one considered the language of instruction not to be an obstacle at all in internationalizing education. This is because all of them have a foreign language other than Arabic as their main language of instruction. All of them declared having mandatory languages courses other than Arabic. b) Some universities offered

area studies and courses with international focus. However, all of them declared having courses on world peace and cultural studies. Very few organized seminars and conferences on international topics. Although the vast majority of universities had possibilities for courses abroad, none were as obligatory graduation requirements. This shows that in general, students are exposed to a variety of international settings and the availability of courses training for international sensitivity is wide and variant. However, in many cases, these courses are not mandatory and it is up to the students' personal choice whether to take that course throughout their degree or not. c) The universities in Lebanon were either of French, American, or Arabic nature. The universities that were of French nature had French as their main language of instruction, were initiated by the French government, had French rectors and followed the French university structure. As for the American universities, they adopted the American system of instruction as well as the English language of instruction. The Arab universities were related to Arab countries and mostly were related to Arabic teaching and curriculum. This explains why universities in general do not consider the comparability of study structure to be a major obstacle in internationalization endeavors since all of them had a form of internationally recognized study structure. d) Many universities stated that they get assistance from foreign universities to develop their curricula and just a small portion has joint/double degrees in some programs with institutions abroad.

The Lebanese state does not interfere with the curricula of the universities which have the total freedom to design and set their own curricula. In general, the curriculum in Lebanese universities has two very strong points within the internationalization framework; the language of instruction which is different than Arabic and the study structures which accompany global developments and reforms.

2.5. Resources and Funding

Government spending in HE is less than 0.5% of the GDP and mostly invested in the Public university, the Lebanese University. External grants and foreign governments form a major support through the provision of financial aids, professors, teaching material and joint programs. Student fees, however, remain the main source of income for private institutions. (Tempus Lebanon, 2010) In the questionnaire, the vast majority of universities rated revenue generation through foreign students' fees not to be a driver or a benefit of internationalization. This is somehow doubtful since most universities identified the lack of resources to be a major obstacle and all of them except the Lebanese University recognized student fees as the main income source.

Regarding the resources, all universities declare having libraries with international content and have internet available on campus. However, the internet connection in Lebanon is still very slow despite the high costs. In addition to that, there are high restrictions on the free circulation of some books and other media where some material is prohibited when it contains specific information or when it comes from

specific regions. All the universities except only one have an international office/position that is responsible for international affairs with staff mostly adequately qualified to hold such functions. Interestingly, international affairs were not exclusively under the responsibility of this IO. On the other hand, some are divided among many other aspects in the institutions and are integrated into all university functions.

2.6. Partnerships and Agreements

Foreign countries have been increasingly interested in establishing universities in Lebanon as a means to spread their culture, their language, and their education system in the Middle East. Foreign countries competed through the establishment of universities in Lebanon. Between all Arab countries, Lebanon was the country that attracted the most foreign students from the Middle East, consequently, offering the foreign countries' higher education in Lebanon ensures that the elite minds of the Middle East be trained through that country's system. This ensured that the countries' culture will be propagated in the Middle East and will lead to educated people who support that specific country.

Another reason for the interest of foreign countries in Lebanon is the new trend to strengthen and ameliorate the communication with the Arab world to decrease hostility between Muslims and Western countries. The strength that the Arab world and specially the Gulf countries have acquired on the economic level forms an additional incentive. Consequently, there is an increasing interest in the Arabic language and culture (Jordan's Competitiveness report, 2007). In addition to that, Lebanon itself is an old country with a very interesting and unique historical background as it has been inhabited by many civilizations throughout history. This makes it a natural site for studies in archaeology, history, speleology, geology and other studies. Further particularities have been identified from the interviews conducted. The Lebanese universities in general enjoy a special position with respect to neighboring Arab countries concerning internationalization. When the Arab world had been hesitant to get involved in international activities because of fear to lose cultural identity, the multicultural setting enjoyed by the Lebanese society since early times has been a major criterion in encouraging internationalization. Furthermore, historically, there has been a political and a dogmatic influence that has limited the choice of many Arab countries in choosing foreign partners. Whereas in Lebanon, and due to its multiculturalism, universities had a much wider choice of international partner countries. These are factors that encourage foreign institutions to sign agreements and partnerships with Lebanese institutions.

However, answers from the questionnaires have identified the interest of universities in Lebanon to expand regionally and locally rather than internationally. The fierce global competition and the lack of resources may have caused universities to become reluctant in engaging in the global arena. Agreements were mostly initiated by institutions themselves or by supranational organizations. A third of the

universities have no preference as to geographical distribution of their partners. The remaining universities have rated Western EU countries, Arab countries, the USA and Canada to be the most attractive regions to seek foreign partners.

In general, universities in Lebanon are very active in signing agreements with foreign partners. They proudly present the list of their international agreements and memberships. However, concern lies in the sustainability of such agreements and whether appropriate effort is done to follow up on such partnerships and take all the benefit from them rather than keeping them as mere signed documents.

2.7. Governance and Management

All of the universities that answered the questionnaire except one have an international strategy and rated their governing board and top management to be highly committed to it. Most of them have their strategy explicitly mentioned in policy papers, mission statements and websites. A detailed scrutiny of the university mission statements found on the websites showed that universities aim to become regional players, aim to form graduates able to operate in a globalized world, welcome students from all nationalities and cooperate with institutions abroad in order to improve their education. However, less interest is shown in becoming international agents and competing globally. This may be a somehow realistic perspective adopted by Lebanese universities.

According to the answers of the questionnaires, universities considered foreign agencies, governments and embassies to play an important role in promoting internationalization. The national government was considered to play a minimal role in this regard.

On a state level, the Lebanese state was passive in the higher education internationalization process that occurred as a natural historical evolution rather than as a consequence of national policies and planning. On the other hand, this lack of interference by the state and the autonomy granted to the private universities may have encouraged foreign countries to establish universities in Lebanon and therefore made Lebanon such an international education field. There is an absence of policies concerning the internationalization of higher education in Lebanon and the only bodies responsible for some forms of internationalization at the national level are the supranational organizations that Lebanon is a member of and that have included Lebanon in a series of international projects that promoted higher education internationalization. Lebanon on a national level is highly involved in projects, programs and cooperation at international level. The problem resides in the fact that this Lebanese involvement was more a consequence of the supranational activities and of institutional initiatives rather than of the national policies.

In other words, the legal framework set by the Lebanese state that aims to regulate the HE sector remain minimal with respect to the huge expansions and development witnessed by this sector and are not being able to develop in the same pace to ensure proper legislative coverage to the HEI activities. Institutional initiatives as well as international policies have had a much more significant impact.

3. Obstacles and Challenges

HE in Lebanon suffers from particular drawbacks such as the sudden massification of students, political interference at many levels, corruption, irrelevant curricula, and decline in quality. (Altbach, 2011) Nevertheless, there are some specific challenges that are most recurrent in the literature related to internationalization of higher education which particularly apply to the Lebanese case especially that Lebanon has been falling in all the traps of internationalization due to the lack of strategic planning and scientific awareness;

a) *National Policies and the political situation*: Foreign countries policies were perceived as an important obstacle during the interviews. Universities in Lebanon suffer from continuous change of policies and regional preferences of foreign countries. According to them, the most stable relationships are those between individual researchers and those initiated by international and supranational organizations. These continuous changes in national policies form a main challenge to setting long term plans of internationalizing higher education, especially in developing countries like Lebanon. In addition to the changes in national policies, the local political situation can be a main challenge and in most cases it can be the one that affects the broader national policies. Universities have been a battle field and were not kept away from different tensions that were witnessed by that country throughout the years. Decisions concerning professors, language of instruction, curriculum, faculties, and university campuses were all affected by these political tensions.

b) *Cultural Identity*: The lack of quality control on foreign providers threatens the cultural identity of the education provided because institutions are not willing to spend money and time to accommodate their educational settings to the country where they deliver. (Knight, 2005)

c) *Data Collection*: A main challenge lies in finding common meaning for similar terms and in the lack of universal definitions which affect the comparability of data, curricula and processes worldwide. (Knight, 2008) Knight identifies this issue as the “definition dilemma.” (ibid, p:93) In addition to this kind of differences in definitions that hinders data collection, many countries and Lebanon specifically lack all kind of reliable and transparent data about education in general and that reflects the true situation with its strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, on both institutional and national level, there is a complete lack of information concerning strategies, numbers and statistics related to internationalization of higher

education. This may be either due to lack of transparency where institutions are not willing to communicate their status, or due to the lack of research and statistics done in that area. In this respect, there is a main problem related to some inaccuracies that appear in the calculation of the inward and outward student mobility where many Lebanese students enrolled at foreign universities were not mobile for studying purposes but may have moved earlier for other purposes or may have been descendants of earlier emigrants, and that many non-Lebanese enrolled at Lebanese universities may be in Lebanon as refugees or for purposes other than to study. Another problem related to statistical data collection is related to the students of Lebanese origins but who hold foreign passports. This creates a dilemma for universities in counting international students registered since a large number of Lebanese students have a foreign passport although they have spent their whole life in Lebanon.

d) Recognition and Quality Assurance: It becomes crucial for countries to have a regulatory framework to register and legitimize foreign providers and monitor them. (Knight, 2005) With the expansion of stakeholders interested in the graduates knowledge and competence, and with the increase of institutions offering education worldwide, it becomes crucial to have clear frameworks that allow the comparison of degrees, the content of study, the period of study as well as the qualifications obtained upon the completion of a given program from a given institution. This promotes fair and informed decisions concerning access to further education or to employment. It furthermore allows differentiating between low and high quality providers. "Given the increased mobility of students taking degrees and looking for employment in foreign countries, there is increasing urgency to develop bilateral, regional and international systems where education institutions will be able to get reliable information on the recognition of qualifications awarded in other jurisdictions and countries. "(Knight, 2005, p:70)

Conclusion

Internationalization in Lebanon is conducted either by personal incentives or by foreign and supranational organizations with a very limited involvement of the Lebanese state. In the earlier years of higher education in Lebanon, foreign countries were interested in opening universities in Lebanon and Lebanon has been ever since clearly ahead of other countries in the region, but there has been recently an increased competition with other countries that have clearer strategies , policies and funding to support this process in their universities, and there is an increased interest of foreign countries in other countries of this region, this puts Lebanon in a critical position.

It becomes clear from this study that the main university rationales and approaches to internationalization are based on a capacity building approach. Universities in Lebanon, with the scarceness of financial and regulative support from the Lebanese state, are in urgent and continuous need to cooperate with universities and organizations worldwide in order to enhance local human capacity and develop own HE

systems. Neither resources nor research are sufficient to appropriately reform higher education to meet global standards.

In addition to capacity building, universities in Lebanon have a revenue generation approach. Although this may not be apparent in stated rationales, tuition fees are the major income for Lebanese universities and the type of international staff recruited by universities, the international curricula, and the international cooperation between Lebanese universities and foreign universities are strongly used as a means to promote the university and make it more appealing to students (Stromquist, 2007). Universities tend to use their international agreements as a marketing campaign.

Based on the matrix model presented by Davies, Lebanon on an institutional level could be considered an ad-hoc-central strategy where a high level of international activity may take place throughout its institutions but it “is not based on clear concepts and has an ad-hoc character” (Knight and De Wit, 1995). It is noticed that international perspective is found in many university aspects. However, in most cases, they are not based on clear strategies, and are not supported by national or institutional policies and research that cater to the specific needs of the society and ensure a sustainable development in an international setting. Agreements are in many cases not operational, strategies are not clear, and projects are not sustained by adequate work. This considerable amount of international activity in Lebanese university is mostly related to the societal nature of Lebanon, to historic events and to past achievements rather than to continuous, sustainable development.

This study is based on data collected from a single academic year. However, internationalization is a process that takes place over several years and it would be crucial to repeat the study in order to trace developments. Further research needs to be conducted about forms of e-learning as a strategy of internationalizing higher education in Lebanese universities and this aspect has not been discussed in this thesis. Quality assurance in the delivery of international education either at home via foreign institutions or local ones or abroad, is an additional topic specifically important in the Lebanese context that lacks vigorous policies to monitor the quality of higher education specially. However, this study is the first done in this topic about the Lebanese case and it has not been preceded by any similar studies. It was relatively hard to collect existing data and this explains why the most fundamental numbers have been collected specifically for the purpose of this thesis instead of relying on previous studies and building on them to dwell into other topics. Furthermore, universities in general were reluctant to provide information and the lack of transparency was obvious throughout the field work.

This study has tried to identify the main rationales and strategies behind international activities in Lebanese universities. It has been found that universities are eager to have internationalized education in order to improve own provision and ensure quality education that is able to meet global standards.

Universities in Lebanon are very interested and enthusiastic about opening up to the global higher education arena. This is apparent in the considerable amount of international agreements, and the internationalization attempts existing in all major university aspects and functions. However, these dispersed activities are not always supported by proper regulative frameworks and by strategic planning. They tend to exist sporadically with minimal alignment with a higher institutional goal specially that Lebanese universities are on their own in this fierce global competition with no support from the Lebanese state. For all the reasons above, it is clear that urgent measures have to be taken to provide a regulatory framework for internationalizing higher education in order to support the universities incentives, to control the quality of foreign universities operating in Lebanon, and to ensure a sustainable development of internationalized higher education.

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