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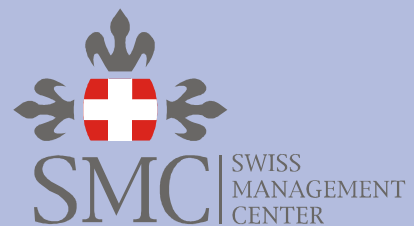
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Post-Graduate education in United Arab Emirates

Change in teaching styles

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About the Author

Currently the author is working as a lecturer with Heriot Watt University's branch campus in Dubai (Academic City).

During this work the author was serving University of Cambridge Professional Postgraduate Program in Management in UAE in the capacity of an Assignment. In addition the author is a DBA Candidate at Swiss Management Center, a Research Scholar, freelance education columnist with GULFNEWS, Management lecturer and Corporate Trainer for Middle and Senior Management.

Abstract

UAE is a fairly new country aging in its mid thirties and so is the education system. In recent years, the UAE education industry has seen phenomenal growth, especially with the inception of educational hubs such as Knowledge Village and the Academic City. In addition to the growing undergraduate programs at these knowledge metropolises, an interesting note is the growth in the number of Post-graduate (PG) programs.

These PG programs are either partnered or franchised or accredited by a foreign varsity. Combination of parent campus, local and online faculty oversee the smooth run of these programs. Such a situation has significant impact on the teaching quality. All accreditation bodies have different requirements.

This paper is going to address the different methods used as modes of delivery for Postgraduate programs at the above mentioned variety of programs. Thereby making the offered programs different from each other, although under a generic label at times. Experiences from students in context with their expectations and delivery satisfaction from the teacher's perspective would culminate in highlighting practices in UAE.

Introduction

Three out of the ¹six foreign market entry strategies namely franchising, licensing and Joint ventures, as identified by Cowell (1984) are well changing the education industry scenario in UAE. In it they are strategies, but the subsequent influence on an industry that is new, but enthusiastic is worthy of note.

Education in UAE is in the true process of globalisation, with 90% of Postgraduate programs coming from rest of the world. Wide range of accreditation bodies and commissions ranging from the Sub-Continent region to North America, emphasize different skills under the same degree tag. This has led to positive bearing on education delivery in a young country.

Table 1 Diverse Education Modes

Mode	Explanation	Education examples	Correspondence with types of cross-border education means
Cross-border supply	The provision of a service which crosses the border (does not require the physical movement of the consumer)	Distance education Online education institutions Education software Corporate training through ICT delivery	Program Mobility
Consumption abroad	Provision of the service involving the movement of the consumer to the country of the supplier	Students who go to another country to study	People mobility
Commercial presence	The service provider establishes or uses facilities in another country to provide the service.	Local university or satellite campuses Language training companies Private training companies	Institution mobility
Presence of natural persons	Person traveling to another country on a temporary basis to provide the service	Professors, teachers, researchers working abroad	People mobility

Certain curricula being offered are designed to ensure a broad and integrated conceptual coverage of the functional areas, and an ability to apply the concepts, principles, analytical tools and techniques to guide decision-making in the global environment of business, whereas some focus entirely on advanced technology supports to parent campus. In such a development, utmost responsibility progresses to the instructor. Various methodologies that are current practices in the industry are discussed in the paper.

Institutions that are service providers in UAE implement the necessary standards of teaching due to the fact that the programs are franchised for a precise period and are monitored by the franchisee's quality control body. The paper is set to

Cross border education in UAE

Cross-border education is growing in importance; Depending on who or what crosses the border, cross-border education can take three different forms:

- A *person* can go abroad for educational purposes (people mobility).
- An *educational programme* can go abroad (programme mobility).
- An *institution* or *provider* can go or invest abroad for educational purposes (institution mobility).

¹ Cowell, D. (1984) The Marketing of services, Heinemann London

²Table 2 Types of Cross Border Education

Type	Main-forms	Examples	Size
1- People			
Student/Trainers	Student mobility	- Full study abroad for a foreign degree - Part of academic partnership for home degree or joint degree - Exchange programme	Probably the largest share of cross-border education
Professors/trainers	Academic/trainer mobility	- For professional development - As part of an academic partnership - To teach in a branch institution abroad	An old tradition in the education sector, which should grow given the emphasis on mobility of professionals
2- Programs			
Educational programme	Academic partnerships E-learning	Joint course or programme with a foreign institution - E-learning programme - Selling/franchising a course to a foreign institution	Academic partnerships represent the largest share of these activities E-learning and franchising are small but rapidly growing activities
3- Institutions/ providers			
	Foreign campuses Foreign\ investments	- Opening of a foreign campus - Buying (part of) a foreign educational institution - Creation of an educational provider abroad	A trend increasing very quickly from a low starting point

Student Mobility:

- ³The UAE has one of the highest rates of admission to higher education, with 90 percent of secondary school graduates entering college and university, leading to increased investment in institutions of higher education

Academic/Trainer mobility:

- ⁴The Higher Colleges of Technology has teamed up with Deakin University, Australia, to provide the postgraduate programme for students at Dubai Women's College and Abu Dhabi Women's College. The new programme will be offered at Dubai Women's College and Abu Dhabi Women's College. Faculty from the Education Department at Deakin will facilitate the degree. They will visit the UAE

² OECD reports on cross-border postsecondary education. *OECD Secretariat CROSS-BORDER EDUCATION: AN OVERVIEW* OECD/Norway Forum on Trade in Educational Services Managing the Internationalisation of Post-secondary Education 3-4 November, 2003 Trondheim, Norway

³ The statistics are a result of research conducted by Dubai-based Madar Research Group.

⁴ John O'Hara, Special to Gulf News Published: 03/19/2005 12:00 AM

twice a year to provide face-to-face teaching. In between their visits, local tutors will teach the students.

Academic Partnerships:

1. British university in Dubai BUID is organised around specialized Institutes, each linked to a leading UK university. Each Institute offers a distinctive discipline. The Institutes offer Masters programme and strive to be centers of excellence for research in their respective disciplines through shared environments with the UK partners.
 - The Institute of Informatics has been established in collaboration with the University of Edinburgh.
 - The Institute of Education has been established in collaboration with the University of Birmingham.
 - The Institute of Engineering has been established in collaboration with the University of Manchester.
 - The Institute of the Built Environment has been established in collaboration with Cardiff University.
 - The Institute of Finance and Banking has been established in collaboration with the Sir John Cass Business School, City University, London.
2. ⁵U21 Universitas 21 Global
3. University of Cambridge Postgraduate program in Management is offered in UAE. Knowledge horizon is the local partner who delivers the program through the established infrastructure in Dubai city.
4. Postgraduate Diploma in Strategic Business IT (PDSB) – NCC education UK The programme is divided into two major qualifications. Al Abbas Institute of Technology will deliver the Postgraduate Diploma in Strategic Business IT (PDSB) element of the programme and students must pass this before they are eligible to go on and study the top-up **MSc** programme online, with the **University of Portsmouth**. AIT offers teaching and tutorial support along with other learning resources for the MSc programme.

Foreign Accredited Post Graduate programs run at local campus

1. ⁶American University in Dubai -.
 - MBA

Foreign campus:

- SPJain Centre for Management – Mumbai (India)
 - Global MBA
 - Executive MBA

⁵<http://www.u21global.edu.sg/cgibin/corp.dll/portal/ep/channelView.do?pageTypeId=33000&channelId=-16963>
Universitas 21Global, established as a joint venture between a **Universitas 21** (international network of leading research-intensive universities) and **Thomson Learning**, is a new e-University with programs designed to excel in shaping leaders for the global economy of the future.

⁶ The American University in Dubai is a branch campus of American Intercontinental University, Atlanta, Georgia

- European University College Brussels- EHSAL is an Institute of Higher Education accredited by the Belgian government.
 - International MBA
- Heriot-Watt University in Dubai
 - MSc IT
 - MSc (Strategic project Management)
 - Accreditation
 - Heriot-Watt is the eighth oldest higher education institution in the UK
- Islamic Azad University- Iran
 - MBA
- Mahatama Gandhi University Off-Campus centre – One of the largest government universities in India
 - MBA
 - MCom
 - MCA
 - MSc IT
- Manipal Academy of Higher education- Mangalore, Karnataka State, India
 - MBA
 - MSc(internet Systems and Security)
- Middlesex University – Dubai (A chartered UK University)
 - MA- HRM
- Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and technology (SZABIST)
Chartered Institute established through an Act of Sindh Assembly (Sindh Act No. XI of 1995) and is approved and recognized by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) as a degree granting institution.
 - MBA
 - E-MBA
 - MS(CS)

Need of Postgraduate programs in UAE

Government of Dubai is under the leadership of H.H. General Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, has extended all of its facilities to make Dubai a leading commercial, trading and tourism hub in the Middle East enjoying a diversified economy with the non-oil sector accounting for 90% of GDP.

Furthermore, the expatriate population that outnumbers the nationals by a mammoth 80% are the major players in job market. Out of these 80% again major populace comes from the Sub-continent. An under-graduate degree is the minimum qualification required for a decent job in UAE. As qualifications enhance, job opportunities for the degree-holder, in the lucrative UAE job market increases. Pre-requisite to much middle to senior level jobs is a post-graduate qualification.

A mature market, dedicated government, enthusiastic expatriate population and fascinated west to the Middle East region, institute the basis of increased postgraduate programs in UAE. The key concept of Emiratisation i.e. employing of UAE nationals into more jobs, especially private sectors, demands educated nationals. Gap analysis identifies, virtual lack of locally developed PG programs and the growing demand for University education.

Evidently this is the booming market for higher education. As described above many around the globe have acknowledged the fact and are facilitating the need of the time. This has led to impressive amplification of PG programs in UAE.

Different accrediting bodies and their Teaching focus

Table 3 PG programs in UAE and relevant accrediting bodies.

Country	Accrediting Body	Program focus
India	University Grants commission - India	Content Knowledge
United Kingdom	Quality Assurance agency for higher education	Focus on "HOW" to think
United States of America	International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education Council for higher education accreditation	Rich in conceptual content equipping students with the applied skills and the professional and ethical perspectives necessary for success in the global marketplace
Belgium	Flemish Higher Education	Programme aims at building bridges to real world. The integrative approach of programmes is conducive
Australia	Australian Universities Quality Agency	Commitment to continued and independent learning, intellectual development, critical analysis and creativity.
Pakistan	Higher education Commission	Content Knowledge

Profile of PG students in UAE

Contrary to the practice in rest of the world, where a postgraduate degree is pursued either immediately after the first degree or followed by a break. Majority of PG students in UAE are working professionals for the reasons identified above; one of which is visa constraint. Males above 18 cannot be under father's sponsorship and therefore need to either leave, or join an institute that offers student visa. In such a situation parents support their children generally up till the basic qualification (First degree). Furthermore, regular PG programs (morning shifts) are not a common practise due to insufficient number of registrations.

Emiratization is leading to more working nationals becoming life long learners. Training budgets of Multinational Corporations are also utilized in assisting employees who opt to be life long learners.

Ingredients of University teaching – UAE case scenario

The mental transformation that we call learning on the part of the student can be facilitated by a combination of the following means on the part of the teacher who has the freedom to choose what (s) he regards as the best:

- Curriculum design and
- Curriculum implementation

Generically identified ingredients do not align well with the current scenario in the UAE. Curriculum design does not happen in locally and a teacher/instructor has partial control over the implementation zone, as focus is clearly set through well-defined learning objectives

provided by the parent program provider. Thorough and continual inspection from relevant accrediting bodies ensures, the endorsed vision of the program franchised, partnered or joint ventured is fulfilled.

Why is it that at the implementation stage, the teacher/instructor does not have enough leverage? Could be the immediate question to follow?

In a curriculum implementation setting following are the general activities: preparation of teaching materials, classroom activities in lectures and tutorials, design of exercises, assignments, projects, and quizzes, feedback to students, and final examinations.

In case of branch campuses, pre-defined syllabi follow from the parent campus who develop these through rigorous procedures in place, by their local education ministries and accrediting bodies.

With the general course outlines specified, design of exercises, assignments, projects, quizzes and feedback to students is the major responsibility for the instructor. How are teachers handling the situation? With advancements in technology supporting the defined assessment criteria and program focus; teachers in UAE, although come from other parts of the world than UAE, have been successfully following diverse styles, making PG education in UAE unique and distinctive despite the country's young education establishments.

Classroom activities

The traditional view of teaching is that of classroom activity, and the traditional view of a university teacher is that of lecturing. What is then the difference in cross border education prevailing in UAE?

Table 4 General Classroom activities of the teacher

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Oral presentation of material (= lecturing), ● Asking questions, ● Responding to questions, ● Providing learning tasks

Table 5 Classroom activities in UAE

General Classroom activities	Classroom activities in UAE
Oral presentation of material (= lecturing),	Not as much of focus on lecturing instead attention on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Informative handouts for extra reading ● Stanford Videos and other web-based materials
Asking and Responding questions	In addition to the regular face to face contact with the lecturer, additional support in form of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assignment tutors, ● Separate tutorial classes, ● Email comments and contacts, ● Class groups and ● University web-portals are used
General learning tasks like individual home-works and projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Paradigm shift from 100% final exam evaluation to projects based assessment. ● In some programs entire qualification rests on a written assignment on a case.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case-Study methodology (Harvard case-studies)
Traditional library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subscription to web based libraries, Journals and Periodicals

From the above findings, a major question is whether advantages of access and flexibility are accompanied by trade-offs in learning experiences and outcomes.

⁷In both school and university settings and in the world outside, it is crucial for people to have “skills in questioning, analyzing, comparing, contrasting, and evaluating so that [they] will not become addicted to being told what to think and do” (Freseman, 1990: 26).

Dr. Mohan Guruswamey senior lecturer UOWD remarks “The most effective strategies at postgraduate level use integrated delivery approaches to create flexible learning environments with premiums on individual time management and practical application of learning”

Harvard case studies are considered the best in Business world and are one of the most illustrious factual ways to expose students to the real world happenings. Similarly the eye connection to learning i.e. the visual learners benefit from Stanford videos, another stimulating technique to disseminate learning experience to students.

Findings clearly depict, with various diverse methodologies in practice, learner is unquestionably in an encouraging environment, of learning from other’s experience, thus leading to excellent ground settings.

With clear concentration on developing critical thinking skills, assessment is case-based in many programs. ⁸The formula for critical thinking seems to be: critical thinking = thinking skills (1) + thinking disposition (attitude) (2) + understanding (knowledge) (3) (Harpaz, 2003). These well aligned as categorized in the table below.

Table 6 Critical Thinking Executions in UAE PG programs

Thinking Skills	Handouts, extra readings, web-based content, videos.
Thinking disposition	Group activities, web based groups and active discussions with supplemented support of assignment tutors and tutorials
Understanding knowledge	Application in case-studies

⁷ Freseman R.D. (1990). *Improving Higher Order Thinking of Middle School Geography Students by Teaching Skills Directly*. Fort Lauderdale, FL: Nova University, cited in Cotton K. (1991). ‘Teaching Thinking Skills’, *School Improvement Research Series (SIRS)*, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. <http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/6/cu11.html>. Last accessed: 24 October, 2005

⁸ Harpaz Y. (2003). ‘Approaches to Teaching Thinking: Towards a Conceptual Mapping of the Field’. Mandel Leadership Institute. <http://www.learningtolearn.sa.edu.au/Colleagues/pages/default/harpaz/>. Last accessed: 22 November, 2005.

Advanced Technology used at the American University in Dubai – An example

Advanced technology supports all aspects of campus operations; most appropriately, the delivery of the University's academic programs. Specifically, ten computer labs with both IBM and Macintosh hardware form the basis for instruction in IT, business administration and the applied arts. Two language laboratories serve to enhance teaching effectiveness in the University's intensive / academic English courses. Among the software packages that are of special usefulness for MBA students in carrying out research for term papers and these is the MINITAB statistical package. In addition, two searchable databases, Business Source Premier and Emerald, are accessible from any workstation connected to the AUD computer network, and are especially useful to MBA students. These databases provide online access to thousands of full-text papers and other material published in a large number of leading international academic and professional business publication

Conclusions

With its unique, educational settings to many it may come as a surprise, but UAE has innovative philosophy to offer; in terms of PG programs teaching and learning process.

⁹On the score of encouraging intellectual independence many non-traditional delivery methods are fairly robust. The challenge for teachers in traditional and semi-traditional environment is a paradigm shift, especially in realizing, excellence that can be achieved through the use of innovative concepts in teaching.

Profile of an Excellent Teacher

Let us put together the different pieces of quality teaching approaches, that we have come up with in the course of our exploration. Our summary of excellence of teaching in terms of the quality of learning, as we saw earlier, involves helping learners to:

- Acquire high quality knowledge content;
- Acquire the ability to apply the knowledge to standard classroom problems;
- Acquire the ability to apply the knowledge to novel types of problems and situations; and
- Become self-directed independent life-long learners.

To achieve this, the first important role of a facilitator is to create a supportive atmosphere within the classroom, real or virtual, for learning. In a supportive environment, students will feel comfortable interacting with one another so that positive intellectual and affective development can take place. They will listen to others, value one another's ideas and learn to handle positive and negative feelings. They will become more confident, more willing to take

⁹ Kate Beattie, Richard James March 1997. Flexible coursework delivery to Australian postgraduates: How effective is the teaching and learning? Higher Education 33 (2) 177-194.

risks and face up to failure. As a result, they will have a strong desire to be personally involved in the learning process ¹⁰(Mohan, 2003).

Means to trigger learning

The quality of the following learning triggers increase the likelihood of learning:

- Formulation of objectives and syllabuses,
- Construction of handouts, selection of readings,
- Classroom activities,
- Choice of modes of topic delivery
- Feedback to students, and design of exercises,
- Design of assignments, projects, quizzes, and
- Design of final examinations- weightage of final examination

Finally a University graduate, the actual character to be nurtured ought to possess the following characteristics.

Profile of a University Graduate

Independent of the area of specialization, a university graduate should possess the knowledge, abilities and attitudes necessary to function effectively in familiar and novel situations in personal, intellectual and professional life. In order to function effectively, one needs to acquire the following:

1. Knowledge: the non-specialized broad-based knowledge that we expect an educated person to have, including an appreciation of the evidence that bears upon this knowledge;
2. Application: the capacity to draw upon available knowledge and apply it successfully in familiar as well as novel situations;
3. Thinking: the general thinking abilities involved in knowledge building, knowledge critiquing, and decision making, as well as the global habits of critical and independent thinking;
4. Independent learning: the capability for independent life-long learning including the capability to engage in independent inquiry;
5. Articulate ness: the general language abilities needed for articulating ideas, opinions, proposals, and values in a clear and effective manner.
6. Mind set and values: the mind set and values that facilitate
 - An awareness of the uncertainty and fallibility of knowledge as well as the social basis of the evolution of knowledge,
 - An open mind,
 - Willingness and ability to doubt and question beliefs, especially one's own,
 - Intellectual curiosity, and
 - Motivation to learn.

¹⁰ Mohan, K.P. (2003). 'What is Good Teaching?' *Ideas on Teaching*, 1: 58–59.

7. Interpersonal skills: the interpersonal skills that facilitate the effective employment in a team or community.

Further research and limitations of the study

Being one of the very few researches that are conducted in the region, the results cannot be generalized. But further research options include:

- Quantitative analysis of job market fulfilment by UAE graduates
- Study of subsequent salary increase and promotions (Being the main focus of these graduates)
- Comparative study of graduates taught by means of traditional approaches and those by modern approaches.

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5. <http://www.u21global.edu.sg/cgi-bin/corp.dll/portal/ep/channelView.do?pageTypeId=33000&channelId=-16963> Universitas 21Global, established as a joint venture between a Universitas 21 (international network of leading research-intensive universities) and Thomson Learning, is a new e-University with programs designed to excel in shaping leaders for the global economy of the future.
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