

A Study of Faculty Members' Perceptions of the Effect of the Globalization on Higher Education: The Case of Jordan

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Abstract

The purpose of study was to investigate Jordanian higher education faculty members' perceptions of the phenomenon of globalization and its effect on higher education. The participants in this study were 6 faculty members from a Jordanian university. Four of the participants have leadership positions at the university. Two of them were deans, one of them was vice dean, and the fourth one was a head of department. Semi-structured interviews were used as research method. The researchers formulated the interview questions based on the purpose of the research. Qualitative data analysis techniques were used to analyze participants' responses. Participants' responses to the interview questions were organized, coded, interpreted, and represented. The findings showed that the Jordanian faculty members are aware of the effects of globalization on the fields of higher education. All the participants believed that globalization have positive effect on higher education. Most of the participants believed that the institutions of higher education should work on facing the negative impact of globalization on the national identity, culture, and heritage. Mixed results were found regarding the challenge of applying the principle of free market on the fields of higher education due to the globalization. Based on the findings, some of recommendations were presented.

Keywords: Globalization, Faculty Perceptions, Jordanian Higher education

1. Introduction

Globalization was the result of entering the era of communication and information technologies revolutions that swept the world in the second half of the twentieth century. Such revolutions turned the world into a global village, through the high-speed means of communication and transportation, the flow of information, and the speed mediated by computers and the Internet. However, such rapprochement has brought ideological challenges to some part of the world. Globalization contributed in breaking up the national borders and brought the global borders in terms of reducing the world geographically and politically. In addition, globalization is turning the cultural specificities of the countries into broad global cultural themes, where local political, economic, social and cultural considerations are diminishing in favor of international commercial, political and cultural considerations (Pieterse, 2009).

The age of globalization has brought several challenges to the bodies of higher education all over the world. The globalization challenge varies from one country to another. For instance, Western world perceived globalization as an investment opportunity to their knowledge based capital in the field of higher education (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008). Therefore, the western universities are concerned with improving and marketing their higher education.

However, the effects of globalization on higher education in developing nations such Arab world are different in their nature. Arab countries represent education buyers rather than sellers in the current era of globalization in which free competition, market values, and free economy are applied to the field of higher education. There are several concerns and challenges encounter Arab higher educational systems due to the globalization. For instance, some educational leaders in Arab world perceived globalization as a threat to their identity, culture, and values (Lieber, & Weisberg, 2002). On the other side, some other educators perceived the globalizations as a chance for interaction between the national heritage and contemporary needs, and an opportunity for opening to the global educational and scientific systems (Bloom, 2004).

Therefore, there are needs to investigate the status of awareness of the members of higher education staff of the phenomenon of globalization and its effects on higher education. The current study aimed to examine the Jordanian university faculty members' perceptions of the globalization and its effect on higher education in the Arab countries in general in Jordan in particular.

2. Research Background

Several research studies have investigated the effects of globalization on the field of higher education in the Arab world. Some of these studies examined the needs for higher educational reformations in the Arab world to meet the challenges of the globalization. For instance, El-Arini, (2007) presented some recommendations to develop

the higher educational sector in the Arab world to face the challenges of globalization. El-Arini, (2007) pointed to the importance of developing the traditional universities and providing them with all the technological means to cope with the challenges of globalization, and the requirements of the labor market. In addition, El-Arini, (2007) pointed to the role of the higher education institutions in providing their students with high quality knowledge and skills in order to make them able to compete and challenge the skills and experience coming from abroad.

Other research studies examined the challenges of globalization on specific Arab countries and the national plans to face such challenges of globalization. For instance, Godwin, (2006) presented the challenges of globalization to the educational system of United Arab Emirates (UAE) in terms of the increasing number of the students who leaving the free national universities for the sake western overseas universities. Therefore, the ministry of education at UAE has adopted teaching Islamic and Arabic studies in K-12 education in order protect the cultural and religions customs of the country. In addition, Godwin, (2006) proposed some suggestions to sector of higher education face the consequences of globalization, Godwin, (2006) stated that "The higher education system, must respond to the requirements of the business world by providing education and training suitable for the economic requirements of the nation." (p.12)

One of the main challenges of globalization is its threat to the national language of the Arab world. There is a linguistic shift in language policies in Arab countries due to the effect of globalization on higher education. English language becomes the major language of instruction in the institutions of higher education in several Arab countries. English language has become the main language in the field of scientific research. Many universities in Arab world rely on the faculty members who received their higher education in overseas universities in which the language of instruction is different than Arabic language.

The domination of English language in higher education has been perceived as threat to the culture of the Arab countries, universities, and individuals. Several intellectuals in Arab world have referred to the threat of the domination of English language as the language of instruction in the higher education and its effect on the cultural identity of the Arabic world, they also warned about the establishment of the branches of overseas universities in the Arab world, such as the American and the German universities, and the threats they brought to the culture of Arab countries (Kilani, Dhyat, & Abu Odeh, 2007).

English as a language of instruction in Arab universities has also a drawback students' performance, where students would achieve and perform better in their education when the language of instruction is their native language. Several studies reported positive results of the use of Arabic language in the university education. Using Arabic language improved students' abilities to comprehend, discuss, read, and write in their higher education. Al-Muhaidib (2006) conducted a study about the effectiveness and the efficiency of using Arabic language as the language of instruction in the department of engineering at a university in Saudi Arabia. He reported that 90% of the students believed that their understanding of engineering materials, which is written in Arabic language, is faster and deeper in comparison with their understanding of the materials that is written in English languages. In addition, 82% of the surveyed students reported that using English language as the language of instruction in engineering reduces their sharing and discussion during lectures. Furthermore, 79% of the students believed that they need longer time to read the scientific article written in English rather than in Arabic. In general, 75% of the faculty and 73.7% of the students preferred to adopt Arabic language as the language of instruction in the engineering department.

Another study that carried out by Musbah and Mutaweh , (1988) showed that high percentages students at the department of Science at Kuwait University are suffering from the use English language as the language of instruction. The study found that 64% of the faculty in the university believed that the level of students in the English language is minimal. In addition, 66% of faculty members believed that students' weakness in English language is the reason for their poor comprehension of scientific concepts, 76% of faculty members believed that students' weakness in English language reduces their motivation to learn, 48% of faculty members felt that students have difficulty understanding textbooks in English language, 54% of faculty members indicated that students have difficulty in understanding lectures that are provided them in English language, and 80% of faculty members believed that students who were learning science with English language were making a greater effort in comparison if the language of instruction were in Arabic language.

The uses of English language as the language of instruction become acceptable in most of Arab higher education institutions. Shehadeh and Quzmar, (2008) interviewed seven faculty members from the college of engineering at a university in Jordan regarding their opinions about using Arabic language as the language of instruction rather than English language. The results of the study showed that five out of seven students preferred to teach in English language. Their reason of preferring English language varies. All the faculty members, who preferred English language' received their higher education form English speaking countries. Additional reasons for preferring English language rather than Arabic language included the lack of Arabic textbooks and references, the acceptance of English language as an international language, the market prefers English language speakers. However, the other two faculty members believed that Arabic language is better choice as language of

instruction. Some researchers believed that Arabic language should be used as language of instruction in all filed in Arab higher education institutions. Kilani, Dhyat, and Abu Odeh, (2007) presented an example of Japan, in which the language of instruction in their universities is its national language, and that do not stop it from being one of the most developed nation in the education, science, and technology fields.

The challenge of language is not the only one of globalization, where the principles of market that started to apply for higher education in terms of the supply and demand law and free competitions are forcing more pressure on the Arab higher education. This linkage between the international economic market and the higher educational systems is requiring the institutions of higher education to pay great attention to their quality of education as well as to the offered specializations. The institutions of higher education in Arab world are still relying on the principle of supply, where they provide the market with graduate workforces without taking into account the limits of the need or demand in the market or society. Where in the index of very dangerous status of unemployment and the movement operating in the Arab world, Arab Labor Organization stressed that rates the of unemployment in the Arab world is the highest and worst in the world, and unemployment on the way to bypass all the red lines, which surpassed the 14% (17 million Arab citizens) , of the work force, and 25 per cent among young people, and the report noted at the same time that the Arab countries host more than 12 million foreign labor (Salem, 2008). In Arab world there are excessive interests in the faculties of humanities, law, and morality without the faculties of medicine, science, and engineering (El-Arini, 2007). Taking the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as an example for the number of students who are attending the universities in various majors and levels for the year of 2005 showed that the percentage of new students in the undergraduate level reached (75.8%), and the percentage of new students in the diploma level has accounted for (21.9%), while the percentage of new students in the graduate level reached (14.08%) (Ministry of Higher Education, 2005). For the selected specializations of the new students, the predominance of the students were in the theoretical specializations, where (82.72%) of the students were in one of the following : teachers preparation, educational sciences, humanities, social and behavioral sciences, press, media, or business and administrative majors, while the remaining fields of the nature of the scientific, which include: physics, mathematics, statistics and informatics, engineering, industrial engineering and manufacturing industries and manufacturing, architecture, construction or health combined account for approximately (17.27%) (Ministry of Higher Education, 2005). The large increase in the number of new students in the theoretical disciplines as well as the percentage of undergraduate students reveals a side of the imbalance in educational policy and the lack of harmonization of the output of higher education in the Kingdom (Al-Otaibi, 2007). Arab countries is also suffering from the problem of brain drain to Western countries, where Arab countries are losing half of the number of their recent graduates medical doctors per year, and about 23% of their recent graduates engineers, as well as 15% of their recent graduates science major students, where most of these workforce immigrates to United States, Britain, and Canada. Also, about 45% of Arab students studying abroad do not prefer to return to their home countries (Saqr, 2011).

Arab universities have to compete internationally in offering quality education and in attracting Arab students, where many students from Arab world prefer to study abroad or in the overseas branches of the western universities in their country in order to receive higher quality education. Out of more than 400 universities in the Arab world, there are just two universities ranked among the top 500 universities in the Shanghai academic ranking of world universities which are King Saud University and King Fahd University of Petroleum & Minerals (Shanghai ranking, 2011).

3. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate Jordanian higher education faculty members' perceptions of the phenomenon of globalization and its effect on higher education. One of the main investigated effects was related to the use of English as the language of instruction in the higher education in countries which the native language is Arabic as well as the effect of globalization on the national heritage of these countries. The other examined effects of globalization were related to the application of the market principles on the field of higher education.

4. Research Methods

In order to explore Jordanian higher education faculty members' perceptions of the phenomenon of globalization and its effect on higher education, six faculty members were selected for interviewing purposes. The invitations for participation were sent to several faculty members, only six participants agreed to participate in the study. The participants were from different departments. Three participants were form the college of education. Only one participant was from the colleges of engineering, nursing, and literature. All the participants were males who their ages were between 36 to 55 years old. Some of the participants have administrative jobs at the university as well as being faculty members. Two deans, one vice dean, and one chairman were among the participants. Four participants had their doctorate degree form Arab countries, while two of them had their doctorate degree from western countries that include England and USA.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants. The interview questions were constructed to investigate participants' perceptions of the phenomenon of globalization and its effect on higher education. The interview questions were reviewed by three faculty members from the college of education at a Jordanian university in order to examine the validity of them. Qualitative data analysis techniques were used to analyze participants' responses. Participants' responses to the interview questions were organized, coded, interpreted, and represented.

5. Results

5.1 The General Effects of Globalization on Higher Education

In their answer to the questions regarding the influence of globalization on the field of higher education in general, most of the participants believed that globalization have positive effects on the field of higher education in Jordan. The participants provided several reasons for such perceptions. For instance, Salem believed that the globalization made the institutions in higher education as well as their faculty members compare their curricula, results, and performance with other international universities. Salem stated that:

I think that most of the results of the globalization are positively affected the field of higher education. The positive effects were on the levels of the institutions of higher education as well as faculty members. For example, the university can compare its outcomes and performance with other universities. In addition, the faculty members can enhance his curricula, way of teaching, and student's performance through use of data related to his class that is available from other universities.

Other faculty members stressed on the positive benefits of globalization for higher education students in term of saving time and effort in accessing knowledge all over the world. Samer stated that "globalization made the learning process and acquiring knowledge easy. Now it is easy for the students to access knowledge compared to the past". Kaled agreed with Smaer regarding the benefits of globalization for students. Kaled stated that "with globalization it is easier for the students to get the educational information from different sources".

Aos also pointed to the positive effects of globalization on the students level in term of the giving them the opportunity to choose among universities. Aos stated that:

In the past, most of the students were attending local universities. But now, the high school and the graduate students can chose among varied collection of national and international universities. With the availability of computer and internet technologies, the students can apply for most of the international universities.

5.2 Globalization and the Use of English as the Language of Instruction in Higher Education

Most of the interviewed participants believed that English language should be continued to be the language of instruction in the medical, engineering, and science fields. The participants reported some reasons for their opinion regarding the use of English language. For instance, Salem noted that "Most of the books and research journals for medical, engineering, and science fields are in English language". Furthermore, Amer stated that "English is an international language; it is the language of the world". Ahmad believed that there is need to use English language in the medical, engineering, and science fields in order to keep the students updated with new findings in these fields.

However, one of the participants reported his experience in the Jordanian Arabic Language Academy that that have the responsibilities of conducting studies and research related to the Arabic language and the deployment of new terms that are consolidated in the Arabic language in various media, and circulated to state agencies. Kaled had worked at this Jordanian academy and he reported that the academy had translated some scientific book from English language into Arabic language. In addition, he reported that some of these books were used in some Jordanian universities and the students who used the Arabic book performed better than the students who used the English language book. Aos pointed to the role of technology in overcoming the barrier of language in all fields. Aos Stated that:

I think it does not matter that much what the language of instruction would be in any fields. The computer and internet technologies made almost all the higher education students bilingual. Now, any information can be translated in any language in few seconds in very easy steps.

5.3 Higher Education and the Challenge of the Effects of Globalization on the National Heritage

Most of the participants believed that globalization have negative impact on the Jordanian heritage. All the participants believed that higher education institutions have the responsibilities to face the negative consequences of globalization. Aos stated that:

The field higher education has influence on all the fields of the country. All the teachers in K-

12 schools have their university education. So if you want influence whole society, higher education institutions are the best places to start with. Therefore, to face the negative impacts of globalization on the Arab society, higher education institutions should take responsibilities of preserving the national culture and identity.

Most of the participants believed that the Jordanian higher education institutions have made some efforts to face the negative effects of globalization on the national heritage. For instance, some participants pointed to the offered class at all the Jordanian universities that called 'National education'. For the answer of the questions regarding the role of the Jordanian universities to face the negative effect of globalization, Aos stated that:

A required class for every single university student in Jordan is 'National education' class that aims to teach students history of Jordan and it aims to enhance the loyalty of the students to their country, culture, religion, and language.

However, some participants reported that the institutions of higher education should do more to face the negative effects of globalization. For Ahmad stated that:

What the Jordanian universities do to face the effect of globalization on the national heritage are not enough. The Jordanian institutions of higher education should have some contributions in controlling the tools of globalization in form of satellite TV channels, internet, and mobile phone applications.

Kaled supported the idea that the Jordanian universities are not doing enough to face the negative effects of globalization on the Jordanian identity and heritage. Kaled stated that:

The Jordanian universities need to pay more attention to increase students' awareness of the globalization and its effects on the national culture and heritage. The university students should be taught on how to face the negative effects of globalization on the national identity, culture, and heritage.

5.4 The Challenge of Globalization and the Applications of Free Market Principles in the Field of Higher Education

All the participants believed that Jordanian universities are competing with the international universities as well as the international universities that have branches in the Arab world and in Jordan. Therefore the participants reported that there are need to focus on the quality of the higher education outcomes rather than the quantity. For instance, Kaled stated that "there is need to focus on quality rather than quantity in higher education". However, some participants believed that applying the market principles to the field of higher education institutions have made the Arab and the Jordanian universities struggle to reach the international standards. For instance, Samer stated that:

Currently, Arab universities, including the Jordanian ones, are not able to compete in the field of higher education. For instance, the top 500 universities in the world included only two Saudi Arabia universities. Therefore, there are needs to do comprehensive review of the status of the higher education institutions and come up with plan to enhance the status of the Jordanian universities.

Other participants believed that applying the free market principles to the field of education benefits the Jordanian institutions of higher education in term of providing references to these universities to compare their status. In addition, applying the free market principles to the field of education made some international universities look for cooperation with Arab universities and offers mutual programs that would benefits Arab universities, faculty members, and students. Aos stated that:

As results of higher education competitions, some international universities started to cooperate with local universities in term of offering mutual programs and offer opportunities for Arab and Jordanian students to pursue their higher education.

Some of the participants provided some recommendations regarding the challenge of applying free market principles to the field of higher education due to the globalization. Amer stated that:

The Public Arab universities rely on the governmental support to cover their expenses. However, most of the time the governmental support is not sufficient and the public universities might struggle financially, Therefore, I suggest that the governments in Arab world should provide the higher education institutions with appropriate funding to suit their financial needs that are necessary to perform in the competitive market.

Some other participants pointed to the importance of the mutual cooperation among the Arab higher education institutions in order to face the challenge of globalization and to safe the national identity. For instance, Aos stated that:

Arab universities should take advantages from the development of communications and information technology to increase cooperation among them in order to unite in face of the negative effects globalization on higher education.

Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the results, it is clear that the Jordanian faculty members are aware of the effects of globalization on the fields of higher education. In general, all the participants believed that globalization have positive effect on higher education in term of the flow of information via communication and information technologies that would benefit Arab universities, faculty members, and students. In addition the participants believed that globalization allows the students in higher education to choose among varied universities. Regarding the participants' perceptions of the use of English language as the language of instruction, the findings were similar Shehadehr and Quzmar's (2008) in which the faculty member supported the use of English language as the language of instruction in scientific majors. Despite the results that showed the positive influence on university students' performance due to the use of Arabic as the language of instruction (Al-Muhaidib, 2006). Most of the participants believed that the institutions of higher education should work on facing the negative impact of globalization on the national identity, culture, and heritage. Mixed results were found regarding the challenge of applying the principle of free market on the fields of higher education due to the globalization. Some participants believed that Arab universities benefits from the free market in the field of higher education in term of providing references to these universities to compare their status as well as the increase of cooperation with international universities. While other participants believed that Arab universities are struggling to compete in the international field of higher education.

In conclusion, the Arab universities, including the Jordanian ones, should focus on the quality of education rather than the quantity. In addition, the Arab institutions of higher education should take advantages of the phenomenon of globalization in terms of looking to cooperate with high ranked international universities. Arab higher education should take advantage of the of the available communication and information technologies to teach the students how to know rather than what to know.

In order to face the challenge of negative effect of globalization on the national identity, culture and heritage, the Arab institutions of higher education should have positive effect in the contents space TV channels and internet. The universities in the Arab world should cooperate to face the challenge of globalization and its effects on the Arab identity. Arab governments should support their public and private universities to able to compete in the international market of higher education.

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