FACTORS AFFECTING THE RESPONSIVENESS OF LEBANESE PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES TO INTERNATIONALISATION

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# 

**Abstract**

Since 1990, internationalisation has expanded in the higher education (HE) sector, although there are different approaches to internationalising the education system. The literature has established a wide range of benefits and risks associated with internationalisation, and in Lebanon, internationalisation is still a relatively new development in HE. This research explores internationalisation within higher education institutions (HEIs) in Lebanon and aims to identify the factors that affect the response of Lebanese private universities to internationalisation. Two methods of data collection were employed: semi-structured interviews with key personnel involved in the internationalisation process in three private universities and documentary analysis. Data collected were analysed and interpreted using thematic and content analysis, while institutional theory and diffusion of innovation theory were employed as frameworks for the analysis. First, the study offers empirical evidence of the explanatory power of the two theories employed for the analysis of the findings. Second, the results identified various institutional and organisational factors that influence internationalisation processes, as well as the influence of stakeholders’ perceptions.

Normative and mimetic forces were identified as factors that affect responsiveness in Lebanese HEIs. Leadership characteristics that favour the implementation of internationalisation processes were identified, in addition to reasons for resisting change. The research offers pertinent and timely information surrounding internationalisation practices of Lebanese HEIs. While COVID-19 hit the world hard, the internationalisation of HE was significantly affected too. Airports were closed down, countries and all education sectors where affected. The findings of this study can help illustrate best practices when implementing internationalisation processes and help raise awareness of the importance of internationalisation among many lawmakers in different branches of government and the education sector, in addition to assisting students and their parents in their choice of university.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Internationalisation in Higher Education

The process of incorporating an international, intercultural, or global component into the goal, functions, or delivery of post-secondary education is known as internationalisation. In practice, internationalisation of Higher Education (HE) is the process of commercialising research and postsecondary education, as well as international competition for the recruitment of foreign students from wealthy and privileged countries, with the goal of generating revenue, securing national profile, and establishing an international reputation. HE has become an integral aspect of the globalisation process, allowing supply and demand to be matched across borders (Murshudova, 2011). As a result, HE can no longer be considered solely from a national perspective. This necessitates a broader definition of internationalisation, one that encompasses the entire operation of HE rather than just one dimension or feature of it, or the acts of a few persons inside it.

Internationalisation has three rationales: idealism, instrumentalism, and educationalism. Idealism in terms of international cooperation: an idealist argument for internationalisation in higher education can help to create a more democratic, fair, and equal world. Instrumentalism, in terms of organisations’ practical and financial objectives. This logic has an impact on policymakers in terms of increasing transparency and mobilisation between national educational systems, facilitating and simplifying people's movement, and merging university degrees, grading systems, and so on (Knight, 2012). HE, according to instrumentalists, is a means of maximising profit, ensuring economic growth and long-term development, and imparting government, multinational business, stakeholder, or supranational regime ideology. In addition, HE is necessary to meet the needs of the capitalism and global world. In this regard, universities that support internationalisation are more likely to boost their country's academic competitiveness on a global scale. In terms of concealed cultural goals, instrumentalism and idealism might be contrasted. In educationalism, internationalisation in HE is widely accepted by educators as a means of widening students' and faculty members' academic experiences. Though globalisation of HE has received considerable favourable attention, and the process offers significant benefits for higher education systems and institutions, it also comes with a considerable dangers, obstacles, and controversies. A number of debates have taken place in numerous countries about the directions of internationalisation and its positive and negative features. It has been pointed out that too many initiatives have privileged HEIs in the West while doing little to support long-term progress for individuals in developing countries.

According to the International Association of Universities (IAU) Survey, internationalisation is advantageous to HE (Knight, 2012), yet almost 70% of the survey sample believed that major hazards are linked to the international components of HE. Commercialisation, brain drain, and poor education were cited as the primary hazards linked with the internationalisation of HE. Furthermore, each of these dangers is related rather to cross-border aspects of internationalisation than to activity on campus. Many institutions regard international initiatives as a means to acquire money to balance their budgets, which is one of the main motivations driving internationalisation efforts. Overseas universities are trying to attract international students in order to increase their tuition prices. The internationalisation of HE also poses dangers such as loss of cultural or national identity, standardisation of worldwide curriculum, and brain drain. It is vital to emphasize that these internationalised HEIs pose a challenge to the host society's cultural values. According to Knight (2012), the major risk factor associated with internationalisation is the loss of cultural identity. Furthermore, the internationalisation of HE is increasing the socio-economic divide, resulting in claims of discrimination among students from developing countries. It can be seen as a threat to the intellectual, cultural, and economic fortunes of developing countries, as rich countries prepare these students for higher or professional study or job placement in their native countries. Western advanced HEIs have also been associated with academic colonialism, in which they strive to expand their academic influence into underdeveloped countries. For example, HEIs based in European nations now have branch campuses in places such as Vietnam, Singapore and Qatar. This colonisation includes internationalisation of curriculum, programs, academic staff and the students moving towards developed countries for admission (Khorsandi Taskoh 2020).

## 1.2 The advantages of internationalisation

### 1.2.1 Economic growth

Many of the policymakers in UK believe that investing in the HE sector would lead to a long-run economic growth. Due to the technological progress, there was a rise in the demand for skills and knowledge which would be the key to economic success and can only be attained at the level of HE (Holmes, 2013). HE is important for economic growth because it can equip students with skills that will enhance their creativity and productivity in the workplace (BIS, 2011). HE affects economic growth through the generation of new knowledge and accumulation of capabilities and skills. Statistics show a clear correlation between HE and career development (Holmes, 2013). Foreign students who stay in the host country or decide to return to their country of citizenship are viewed as having enhanced human capital stocks (Adnett, 2010). In contrast to previous thoughts that international trade is only in goods, services and capital, the current process of internationalisation of education trends changed people's thinking to consider education services as part of international trades due to the flow of human capital and expansion of economic markets. This change is due to the availability of skilled labour both in developed (Machin, 2004, Jones and Romer, 2010) and developing countries (Goldberg and Pavcnik, 2007). Within the process of globalisation, goods and services are circulated freely and open labour markets are encouraged (Bashir, 2007).

### 1.2.2 The reputations of the educational institutions

Reputation is considered to be one of the most important aspects of the education institutions in a century where there is competition among universities to attract the highest number of foreign and local students and be ranked as the top universities within their country, region and globally. Within the education context, reputation is viewed as a wholesome assessment of the organisation (Barnett et al, 2006) and it represents the history of the organisation, since it is a competitive advantage and it is gained over time (Srivastava et al, 2001), and it is also based on opinions gathered from various stakeholders over time. Reputation is difficult to change, and it does not alter very easily (Highhouse et al, 2009). Gaining a reputation is an arduous process and it requires commitment to quality in education and research output (Arambewela and Hall, 2009). In the global report of International Association of Universities (IAU), enhancing the international profile of universities and their reputation was identified as one of the advantages of internationalisation of tertiary education institutions (Beelen, 2011). Internationalisation can bring funds and visibility to the university. In addition to that, educational institutions which have a high level of autonomy in setting prices for student tuitions can make important investments in the internationalisation process and consequently improve their educational reputation (Delgado-Marquez et al, 2013).

## 1.3 The disadvantages of internationalisation

Internationalisation has motivated students to travel abroad or enrol in franchised programs or use distance learning technologies such as e-learning. These tools despite having advantages also have disadvantages (Hameed et al, 2008). For students learning in overseas universities, the disadvantages are, in addition to cost, insufficient language knowledge, difficulty in adapting to different learning styles, isolation and disengagement. Whereas for franchising, the main disadvantage is assuring the quality of the local provision. Regarding e-learning, the most frequent criticism of online learning is the complete absence of interactions between instructor and student as well as amongst the students (Mayes, 2002). Instructors are also unable to ascertain which students are taking an online assessment (Olt, 2002). Through this method learners, more isolated due to lack of interaction, explanations and clarifications, become less effective since there is no face-to-face interaction, the development of communication skills among learners becomes difficult, since they do not have the platform to practice their communication skills, cheating might be difficult or even impossible to control and socialisation skills among learners can be negatively impacted. In addition to that, some disciplines are not applicable to the online learning such as the scientific fields where the learners need to have hands-on practical experiences. Researchers have concluded that online learning is more appropriate to the fields of humanities and social sciences than scientific fields, such as medical sciences and engineering where the student must have practical skills (Hameed et al, 2008, Akkoyuklu and Soylu, 2006).

## 1.4 The Lebanese Higher Education System and internationalisation

The HE system in Lebanon is the oldest in the Arab region. Its history dates back to 1866, when the first university was founded under the name of the Syrian Evangelical College, which later came to be known as the American University of Beirut (AUB), followed by the University of Saint Joseph (USJ) established in 1875, and then by the Lebanese American University (LAU) established in 1947. In addition, in 1951 the first and only public university in the country, the Lebanese University (LU) was founded. Moreover, in 1955, the Armenian Haigazian University was founded, followed by the Beirut Arab University (BAU) in 1960 in collaboration with the Egyptian university of Alexandria. After the end of the civil war in 1990, the HE witnessed a rapid expansion, whereby today there are 45 private universities and one public university in the country (Government of Lebanon, 2019). The Lebanese HE system is characterised by autonomy, openness, diversity, and competitiveness (El-Ghali and Ghalayini, 2016). The qualities of the HE system in Lebanon have enabled graduates from Lebanon to be accepted in prestigious and ivy-league institutions worldwide. This have also encouraged students and academic staff, particularly from the Arab region, to join Lebanon’s tertiary institutions, thus further cementing Lebanon’s recognition as a renowned centre for learning. However, internationalisation is a relatively new field in HE in Lebanon (AUB, 2019). In addition, the country lacks clear policies that address the organisation and development of international dimensions of HE (Government of Lebanon, 2019). However, various forms of internationalisation of HE are present in Lebanon, as will be presented in the following paragraphs.

There are several foreign HEIs currently operating in Lebanon, such as the CNAM which is associated to the CNAM (Conservatoire National des Arts et des Métiers) in France. This institution ISAE-CNAM was established in 1968 in Lebanon, and it offers education that is accredited in France and recognised in Lebanon. Another example is the Arab Open University which was founded in Kuwait in 2000 and opened one of its branches in Lebanon in 2002 (Government of Lebanon, 2019). Also, the École supérieure des affaires (ESA) Business school, established in 1996, is associated with the French Grandes Écoles (École Supérieure Des Affaires) and allows students to have a double diploma from Lebanon and France (Government of Lebanon, 2019). Lebanese universities have also established international partnerships and collaboration with foreign universities. For example, the Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA) programme is a collaboration between the University of Balamand in Lebanon and the University of Lyon in France (Government of Lebanon, 2019). Also, there exists a partnership between the Modern University of Business and Science (MUBS) in Lebanon and Cardiff Metropolitan University in the UK, while the USJ and Balamand universities have opened branch campuses in the Gulf region (Government of Lebanon, 2019). The USJ has also established international partnerships and collaborations with the university Dauphine in Paris (Government of Lebanon, 2019). Lebanese universities have also actively participated in Tempus and Erasmus Mundus projects and currently in ERASMUS+ projects, which all have internationalisation-related missions. At the research level, Lebanese universities have participated in projects in collaboration with the EU, Horizon 2020, and USAID (Government of Lebanon, 2019). The CEDRE programme has also supported research collaboration between universities in Lebanon and France (Government of Lebanon, 2019). On January 2019, the Office of International Programs at AUB hosted a series of sessions for a collaborative workshop on internationalisation in HE. This was the first opportunity for Lebanese universities to come together to participate and exchange their experiences and knowledge on best practices and challenges in the field of international HE (AUB, 2019). The workshop concluded with a joint pledge made among the participating universities to plan collaborative efforts in order to strengthen the field of international HE in Lebanon (AUB, 2019).

## 1.5 Research aim and focus

The overarching research question is: what factors affect the responses of universities worldwide and specifically in Lebanon to implement internationalisation? There are 45 private and one public university in Lebanon (Government of Lebanon, 2019), therefore, the majority of the Lebanese population are found in the private institutions.

### 1.5.1 Research Questions

This research explores the trend of internationalisation within HE institutions in Lebanon focusing on private universities, and aims to answer the following main research question: What factors affect the response of Lebanese private universities to internationalisation?

The secondary research questions are:

1. What is the relationship between internationalisation and institutional theory and how it affects responsiveness?;
2. What are the organisational characteristics of the universities that favour internationalisation?;
3. What is the association between the university stakeholders’ perceptions of internationalisation and their responsiveness to its implementation?; and
4. What is the link between internationalisation and student enrolment?

To understand how key agents to leverage resources that create new institutions or to transform the existing ones (Maguire et al, 2004); and in response to question number one, the link between internationalisation and institutional theory should be clear in order to know how characteristics of leadership influence responsiveness. And since there is a significant connection between the environment and the characteristics of a system (Scott, 2003); question number two will identify the characteristics of universities that are engaged in the international trade in HE services. To address questions three and four; the research will focus on the diffusion of innovation theory (Rogers, 1995) to understand the factors that would lead to enrolment of students in HEIs and whether implementing internationalisation would be considered as an innovation which helps the university to attract the highest number of students. Consequently, the perceptions of students could either drive or hold back the adoption process.

## 1.6 Structure of the thesis

The following chapter (2) presents the definition, rationale, and dimensions of internationalisation, as well as its critiques and dangers. Chapter 3 examines the context of the higher education system in Lebanon, its history, its structure and the major legislative changes that have had an impact on its functioning, as well as internationalisation of education from a Lebanese perspective. Chapter 4 provides the theoretical and empirical background for the study. In particular, it introduces the concept of institutions and organisations, institutional theory and institutional analysis, and the diffusion of innovation theory and how they are linked to internationalisation. The chapter also provides a literature background on the effect of organisational characteristics and organisational leadership in implementing internationalisation. At the end of chapter 4, the proposed research model is presented. Chapter 5 describes the research process and methodologies employed in the current research project. It focuses on the research philosophy and approach and the choice of the research strategy. In addition, the chapter describes the data collection tools used in the study and the methods of data analysis. Finally, a discussion of the limitations of the methodologies adopted and the reliability and validity of the data collection instruments will be presented. Chapter 6 presents the research findings from the documentary analysis, by providing a detailed description of the documents used to acquire information on internationalisation activities within the university and internationalisation-related projects in which the universities are involved. Chapter 7 presents the findings of the semi-structured interviews by drawing upon the experiences of the selected universities and organising the categorised set of data into a table. In addition, chapter 8 provides a thematic and content analysis of the documentary analysis and semi-structured interview findings with a discussion of the identified themes in relation to the internationalisation literature and the theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapter 4. Chapter 9 discusses the key findings of the study in light of the research questions and summarises the contributions of this study to practice and to the body of knowledge on internationalisation. Chapter 9 also presents the limitations of the current research and recommends directions for further research.

## 1.7 Conclusion

Higher education is the current trend in the ‘century of knowledge’ and students try by all means possible, to secure the education of their desire. Due to the high demands of students, universities compete to offer the best quality of knowledge, latest technologies, good tuition fees and many other benefits to students to attract them join their institution. This is the case in the region as well as in Lebanon, where the competition is even higher given the presence of 45 private and one public HEI. For universities to cope with the situation, they enter to the world of internationalisation in a hope that it would add value to the institution and hence increase the number of students applying to it, because students take into consideration various factors when applying to a university such as cost of education, distance of university, reputation, quality of teaching among many other things. Increased academic competition worldwide has made universities realise the need to enhance their international competitiveness through internationalisation, particularly of student mobility in addition to teaching and research activities. It has been concluded from the reviewed literature that the main goal of internationalisation is the developmentof universities, and all other goals can be combined together to serve this main goal. For example, internationalisation helps improve the quality and level of research at universities, it enhances the university prestige and reputation, and it improves faculty and staff quality. Academic studies reveals as well that the most important practices of internationalisation are student mobility, strengthening students’ English proficiency, hiring international staff and researchers, sending staff and faculty members abroad for training and research, etc. Finally, while it has highlighted the benefits of internationalisation, academic literature has identified some risks as outcomes of international trade in HE services as well. Some of these risks are: widening the gap between universities, increasing regional variation, overemphasising the acceptance of international students, and overuse of English as a teaching language. In light of this introduction, the researcher believes that conducting this study will add to the body of literature on internationalisation globally and provide baseline preliminary data on internationalisation in the Lebanese context specifically.

# Chapter 2: Internationalisation in Higher Education

This chapter will cover internationalisation in HE systems. It will focus on the four main rationales for the internationalisation of HE, which are economic, socio-cultural, political, and academic. Each of these rationales will be discussed in detail below. Several factors have been identified affecting students’ movement across the globe which are assumed to be the dimensions of internationalisation such as language, cost of education and political factors. The chapter will also explain how internationalisation of education is part of the international trade in services. Moreover, this chapter will cover the internationalisation of the curriculum, as well as the critiques and potential dangers of internationalisation.



## 2.1 Definition and rationale of internationalisation in Higher Education

In a century known as the century of knowledge (Grigoryeva et al., 2015), education has been observed as something noble and high. It has been defined by Grigoryeva et al. (2015) as the “engine of social development” and internationalisation has played a key role in the development of the education sector. There are four main rationales for internationalisation by higher education institutions (HEIs) and they are economic, academic, socio-cultural, and political. The economic rationale aims at developing human resources for the institution to compete with other institutions through provision of a good education and attracting foreign students. Internationalisation helps students to have more sense of responsibility and citizenship as well as scrutinises their explicit and implicit beliefs about their wellbeing. For this reason, exposure to international views makes the students more prepared for the globalised world in which they are all living. Students who study in internationalised universities have greater exposure to and knowledge of international perspectives and they are better prepared for international progress (overseas jobs) since they develop the necessary skills, cultural awareness, and adaptation techniques (Murphy, 2007). Some researchers also argue that internationalisation aims to enhance research capacity of the university (Altbach, 2007), so overall, it can be seen as a package of components that aims to meet the requirements of the labour force, compete internationally on development projects and advertise the HEI to the international market, in the hope of longer-term profit.

The academic rationale is linked with quality improvements to achieve academic standards for research and teaching. When international dimensions of research, service and teaching are developed within an HEI, then value is added to the quality of the university (Qiang, 2003). Over the years the academic environment has changed, and universities have to be diverse in their economic sources, modern and market oriented. The socio-cultural rationale involves cultural diversity and highlights the culture and language of the country as well as acknowledging the importance of embedding foreign culture and languages. This rationale is considered to be the counterbalance of globalisation (Giang, 2003). As for the political rationale includes a country’s stability, security, and ideological influences within a country. Usually this promotes national identity (Pritam, 2008). Within an institution, these rationales might overlap and might change over time as a means of achieving the overall vision of the university. Although the internationalisation of HE is a new phenomenon, it has rapidly evolved. In the recent years, higher education systems have become more global because of their tendency to internationalisation (Zolfaghari, 2009). Many researchers in the field of education argue that internationalisation will become an essential component of the HE sector.

Examining internationalisation in HE incudes three dimensions. Firstly, there are internal integration activities to provide sustainability for internationalisation. Secondly, internationalisation is a dynamic process, evolving continuously. Thirdly it is associated with many activities linked to research, teaching and services in the HEI. Thus, it is assumed that a lot of efforts are put in place to make the HEIs responsive to the challenges and requirements of globalisation (Jowi, 2009) and due to high levels of demand in the education sector and higher numbers of graduating students annually, the labour market needs adequate preparation (Zha Qiang, 2003). Different countries adapt different policies to internationalise their education systems and attract the highest number of international students. Internationalisation started in the 19th century when American students travelled to Germany to receive their higher education within the German universities. Germans were the first that were able to combine teaching with research and become one of the most important destinations for students from many different parts of the world. Germans succeeded to be role models for Americans in establishment of many universities such as John Hopkins University and University of Chicago which are both based on the German model (Wildavsky, 2010). As of 1990, internationalisation has been growing in the education sector, the number of students studying abroad increasing fivefold between 1975 and 2011, when there were more than 4 million students studying outside their own country according to OECD data. Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom (UK), France, Canada and the United States of America (USA) are the main countries supplying educational services; they tend to accept more than 50 percent of foreign applicants into their educational system (OECD, 2013). These countries have witnessed remarkable growth of international students between 2002 and 2009. International student enrolment in Canadian educational institutions increased by 67 percent; from 52,650 students to 87,789 students. The UK’s trend in international student enrolment is close to Canada with an increase of 62 percent (from 227,273 to 368,968 students). Although the USA remains behind these countries with 13 percent increase in the number of international students, it remains the country with the highest number of international students in 2009 globally (Choudaha, 2012). It is assumed that the share of international students will be shifted to other countries due to the opening of new markets and increased competition (Zakaria et al, 2016). The below table shows the HE enrolment by region for the years 2002 and 2016 (Table 2.1).

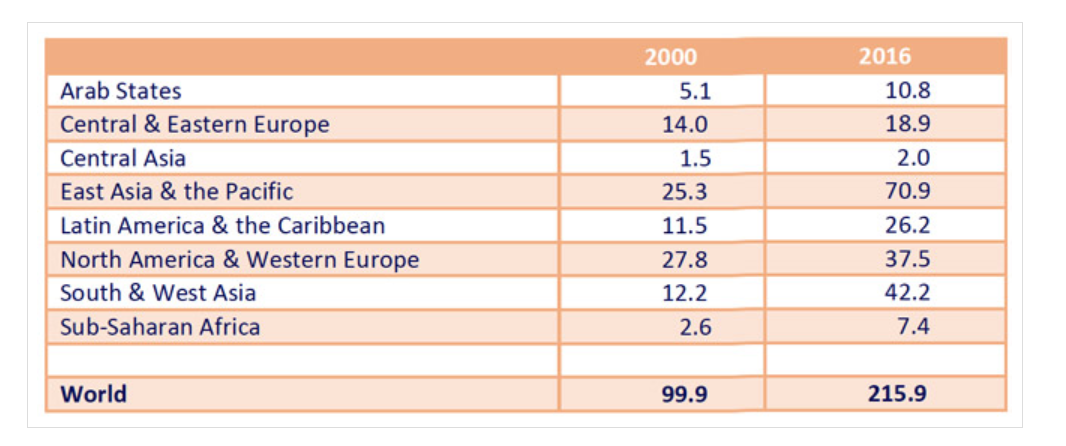


Table 2.1: Higher Education enrolment (in Million) by region for the years 2000 and 2016 (Calderon, 2018)

Between 2002 and 2010, globally international movement increased from 2.1 million students to 3.4 million students, a 62 percent increase (UNESCO, 2012). Based on the Institute of International Education, between the academic years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011, there was a 4.7 percent increase in the international student enrolment (IIE, 2011). The reasons behind this movement could be mainly linked to population growth and increased demand for HE. A 2018 report projects that the world will observe a nearly 200% increase in global HE enrolments by the year 2040, which is the equivalentof 600 million students (Calderon, 2018). This projected growth rate adds up to an average of 4.2% increase every year (Calderon, 2018).

## 2.2 Dimensions of internationalisation in Higher Education

Universities have always been seen as global since they had some level of international dimension, either based on their research or the movement of students or universal knowledge (De Wit and Markx, 2012). There are many international dimensions of HE that have evolved over time and these include the export of academic systems, knowledge transfer, competition among students, mobility of students and online learning. Even curriculums are being internationalised. In the last 25 years internationalisation has emerged and has become a trend across all the universities within a country. Several factors have been identified in attracting students from all over the world and examples can be found below.

*Language*

There are many factors in the education sector that creates a market for education services such as economic conditions, sociological and cultural similarities among the countries and political conditions (OECD, 2008a). It is believed that the main attractor for students to choose foreign HEIs is language (OECD, 2008a). For this reason, the flow of students to English-speaking countries is high compared to other countries, taking into account that English is the current universal language, even among non-English speaking countries (Chevalier, 2014). Several countries, such as France, Belgium, Hungary, Japan and Germany, have decided to introduce programmes in English specifically within their Business Schools to attract English-speaking students (Varghese, 2008). Chinese students prefer to study in English-language universities, especially in the UK as their study destination is to improve their foreign language skills and be competitive within international labour markets (Counsell, 2011). Another study among the Taiwanese students found that they intend to study in either the USA or Australia to improve their English skills, their job prospects and better understand western culture (Chen and Zimitat, 2006). Similar views were also present among the Chinese students who believed that Chinese degrees had less career value than UK degrees and attaining their degree abroad would give them the experience of living and working overseas (Counsell, 2011). Among many reasons for seeking education in foreign countries, Vietnamese students reported improving their foreign language competences was one of the main reasons (Nghia, 2015). However, it is also very natural that students tend to choose universities in countries where they know and can communicate so that it will not hinder them from understanding instructions, from being involved in various community projects and from making new local or international friends in foreign countries (McCarthy et al., 2012).

*Cost of Education*

Another factor that affects the decisions of students to study abroad and the destination of their study is the cost of education and other financial considerations. Several research studies have been undertaken on this subject but still the impact of this factor is uncertain. For instance, Scandinavian countries such as Finland, Denmark and Sweden have the same tuition fees for national and international students and yet they are not the leading countries for attracting foreign students (Nyahoho, 2011). Other studies support the hypothesis that students tend to flow to areas where the cost of HE is low (Varghese, 2008). On the other hand, in some countries, tuition costs do not discourage foreign students from attending that specific college because of the high quality of education provided and investment being seen as worthwhile (OECD, 2008a). The issue of the cost of education is not new from a market perspective. It is viewed as a capital investment because if the expected benefits for the students from the education they would like to gain exceeds the cost of education, then they would invest in higher education. Lifetime income, job opportunities and intellectual development are the expected benefits for students from the education while tuition fees, the cost of living, if the HEI is far from their place of residence or oversea, and books and other expenses are the expected costs (Campbell and Siegel, 1967). All of this affects students’ decision to attend any specific HEI in addition to their academic abilities, family income (Radner and Miller, 1970) and quality of schools they are choosing (Holm-Nielsen, 2001). For the various reasons mentioned above, many researchers have concluded that cost was not one of the barriers for education (Aharoni and Nachum, 2000; Grosse, 2000). However, it should be noted that education costs have been increasing significantly. Since the 1980s, the cost of education, and specifically tuition fees, have increased in the USA in a drastic manner and the increase is more than the increase in the median family income and average rate of inflation (Wolff et al., 2014). Almost two-thirds of Americans reported that rises in college prices is much faster than any other cost items (Immerwahr and Johnson, 2009).

*Political factors*

Political stability in a country is a factor that attracts students across the world because students would like to study in countries where there is no conflict. Similarly, students take into account visa formalities and immigration when choosing the host country for HE (Nyahoho, 2011). For example, the 9/11 event that happened in the United States put visa restrictions on travel (Varghese, 2008).

## 2.3 Internationalisation of education with the context of international trade in services

Trade in education services has become one of the key items on the agenda of service industries within international negotiations. International agreements are controlled by the World Trade Organisation (WTO), while international relations in the service sector are structured through the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) (United States International affairs office, 2009). GATS is known to be the first treaty which includes set of multilateral rules covering international trade in twelve types of services, including education services. The global exchange of goods and services, flow of people and information and trade in technology has become an essential component in HE, and thus, internationalisation has provided a global perspective for the education system (Zakaria et al., 2016). As HE is becoming part of global business (Bessey, 2010), it is argued that trade should be facilitated between producers and consumers in the education marketplace. At the Marrakech Ministerial Meeting, the Final Act of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Traded Negotiations was signed on 1994. This Final Act was the final version of the eighth Round of General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), trade negotiations launched in 1986 (WTO, 1999a). GATS was established to cover twelve service sectors which are the following: 1) Business Communication; 2) Distribution; 3) Environment; 4) Education; 5) Construction and Engineering; 6) Financial; 7) Recreation; 8) Tourism and Travel; 9) Transport; 10) Cultural; 11) Sporting; and 12) Health (UNESCO, 2002). WTO along with GATS, to which 164 countries belong, provides the framework to assist countries in establishing satisfactory rules and lower barriers of service trade across national borders to encourage import and export of services. The education sector belongs to the service industry sector within the GATS framework.

The focus of WTO and GATS is open movement of services and people between countries. For this reason, GATS recommended each country to define their own laws and practices in regulating services (US International affairs office, 2009). As countries have their own rules and regulations, cooperation is still a complicated component because of different regulatory environments among the trading countries. This is particularly the issue within the education sector due to the concerns that liberalisation of trade would have negative effect with respect to quality, funding and equality of access to tertiary education. However, HEIs play an important role in aiding the flow of information, financial capital, technology and people (OECD, 2007). Services among GATS have been defined based on four modes of supply for mobility of education services (OECD, 2004). The four modes correspond to cross-border supply, consumption abroad, commercial presence, and presence of a natural person. Cross-border supply is the supply of a service where the service itself travels but consumer and provider stay at their home country. The provider in this case is member from a territory and the consumer is any other member from a different territory. Distance education, education software and virtual education institutions are all examples of cross-border supply in the education sector (Knight, 2006). Consumption abroad is the second mode of supply in GATS. This is when the service is delivered outside the country of the member seeking this service. In this case, the provider stays in the country where the service will be provided and the consumer travels to the country where the service is. Consumption abroad is when a student from Lebanon travels to Germany to enrol in a study to acquire the desired degree (Knight, 2006). The third mode of supply is the commercial presence where the supply of service is through a service supplier via commercial presence. This mode of supply is applied when there are branch campuses of an overseas HEI within a country. Presence of a natural person is the fourth mode of supply within GATS and this is where services are delivered through a supplier present as a natural person within a country different than their original country, for example, when professors, researchers or teachers travel to teach or work in a foreign country (Knight, 2006).

Although there are many advantages of internationalisation, there are also barriers that affect trade in education services because, unlike other sectors, government is a major actor in education both as provider and legislator. These barriers can be grouped into two. The first group can be observed as internal or domestic barriers which are related to supply and quality of education services such as the offered programmes, the size of the institution, tuition fees and reputation of the institution. The second group can be observed as the external barriers which are related to the exports themselves, such as limiting access to markets, obligation of foreign institutions to teach foreigners, preferences given to local institutions and refusal to recognise degrees from foreign countries (Nyahoho, 2011). Barriers in the cross-border supply mode can be non-recognition of a degree or a diploma acquired through distance learning and restriction on the educational material’s imports. Barriers in the consumption abroad mode can be a quota on the number of students to be accepted in a foreign education institution and restrictions on traveling abroad according to the area of study. Barriers in the commercial presence mode can be when there is no approval of franchise operations. Barriers of the presence of natural person mode can be problems of visa and entry restrictions and quota on the number of foreign members in education institutions (Nyahoho, 2011).

Besides these factors, trade in education services is also affected by the political situation of the country. For example, the number of foreign students studying in United States increased in the first few years of internationalisation and then it decreased in the aftermath of the events of 9/11 (Mundy and Iga, 2003). Usually, students prefer to study in foreign countries politically and economically stable and where the human rights are respected. With respect to trade in education services, the country which accepts international students is the country that is exporting the education service, while the country that sends the students to foreign countries to get their diplomas is actually importing the education service (Nyahoho, 2011). In other words, internationalisation of education provision under GATS has, so far, been a process whereby university providers located in developed market economies have expanded their provision of HE. This process has primarily (but not exclusively) been to supply the increased demand for HE from within many developing market economies. International mobility of students is predominantly either from developing countries to industrialised countries or among industrialised countries (OECD, 2008). Almost 50 percent of international students come from Asia and 25 percent from Europe. Although 50 percent represents big portion of students coming from Asia, there is wide diversity in the countries of origin. The leading importer of service education in the year 2006 was China with a share of 15.4 percent. In 2006, 97 percent of foreign students from developed countries, particularly OECD countries, were hosted by other OECD countries, while the percentage of foreign students being exchanged among developing countries was 22 percent and percentage of foreign students traveling from developing world to industrialised world was 78 percent (OECD, 2008a).

The value of education services imports and exports differ greatly between one country and another. Those who reported high value of trade in education services were the UK, Canada and Australia (Nyahoho, 2011). Studies show that Australia had a positive trade balance in education, with exports reaching up to $8 billion and imports around $600 million in the year 2006. Although the UK was among the countries reporting high value of trade in education, the value of trade to the UK was much less than Australia, with exports reaching up to $573 million and imports $25 million in 2005. This represents a contradiction in the data, where the UK was among the preferred destinations for foreign students to receive their HE, yet the data provided by the OECD showed that imports in education services to the UK was not high as expected. This may indicate that data covering the trade in education services is limited and further research is needed (OECD, 2008c). For example, several studies have been relying on cross-mobility of services as an indicator of international trade in education. Finally, students not only stay to earn a degree but also to broaden their horizons, learn the language and gain knowledge in countries different from their origin country (Altback, 2004). Several studies suggest that demand for cross border education will increase to 7.2 million students by the year 2025 (Varghese, 2008) which indicates that the market for HE is expanding. Some students stay abroad in their country of education, for many reasons. Some stay to expand their resumes and CVs, other stay to gain independence, learn self-reliance, and meet different kinds of people.

## 2.4 Internationalisation of the curriculum

Educators and scholars agree that curriculum internationalisation is the most critical of the internationalisation initiatives that can affect all students (Mestenhauser, 1998). Since many students will not travel abroad, internationalisation of the curriculum is seen as the best way to have an exposure to international education. Students will learn international skills and expertise on campus, mainly in the classroom through courses with global themes (Mestenhauser, 1998). Moreover, universities can no longer rely on study abroad programmes that serve a small number of students, many of whom are from elite sections of their society. Instead, HEIs must plan, deliver, and evaluate multilevel curricular and co-curricular programmes so that all students have opportunities to expand their global awareness and participation (Mestenhauser, 1998). Faculty and administrators must collaborate to design deliberate and meaningful spaces for inclusion as part of an internationalisation at home strategy, resulting in international, intercultural, and global learning environments for all students. Internationalising the curriculum, according to some scholars and institutional leaders, is the most challenging and nuanced strategy for internationalising HE.

This may explain why, in comparison to other forms of international practices, progress on internationalising the curriculum has been slow (Betty, 2015). Incorporating global themes, creating new international classes, and expanding foreign language study are the most popular approaches used by institutions to internationalise their curricula (Betty, 2015). Most North American HEIs use "infusion" as the primary form of curriculum internationalisation. Researchers have, however, found barriers to curriculum internationalisation. Bond Huang and Qian (2003) identified obstacles such as: discipline incompatibility, teaching schedule time constraints, and the lack of international knowledge, experience and skills, as well as expertise sharing, among faculty, as factors undermining any attempt to internationalise the curriculum and educate students globally in Canadian universities. Some faculty in the Social Sciences, for example, believe that disciplines such as geography lend themselves to internationalisation, while others in medicine and law believe that the emphasis should be on the national. Additional obstacles that hinder the development of an internationalised curriculum include short-term funding that cannot support such long-term initiatives, conflicting strategies and approaches, a lack of overall coordination, and a lack of experts and specialised staff (Mestenhauser, 1998). Scholars and practitioners generally agree that faculty members play a critical role in the internationalisation process, particularly when it comes to curriculum internationalisation. All faculty members of an HEI must do their part, for the curriculum to be successfully practiced, and implemented thoroughly under supervision. In its strategy papers over the last decade, Queen's University, Kingston Canada, has emphasized internationalisation as one of its strategic goals. One of Queen's University's main objectives was to use a range of tactics to expand its international commitment to meet the evolving demands of the globalised world. These measures included more international content in the curriculum (Queen’s University, 2006). According to the institution's publications, ranges of academic courses with an international emphasis were provided to support students' international learning experiences in the classroom. Many of the courses studied in the three faculties had internationalised names. “International Finance,” “Global Retail Management,” “Multicultural Music Education,” “World Religions,” and “Canada and the Third World,” for example, were all courses with international labels. In addition, it is important to include a strong emphasis on curriculum creation as part of the partnership mandate when forming an international partnership agreement. Three factors are key to understanding internationalisation of the curriculum: there is a focus on process or pedagogy, a focus on content, and a focus on the societal aspects of internationalisation (Absalom et al., 2006).

These lead to three further interrelated concepts which are internationalism, interculturalism, and globalism (Absalom et al., 2006). The *international* notion of the curriculum focuses on the relationship between and among nations. The *intercultural* notion focuses on the interaction between cultures within countries, communities, and institutions. The *global* notion focuses on the worldwide scope and aspect of the integrated curriculum. The prime motivation by so many HEIs to have internationalisation embedded in their institutions is income generation. The fact that all businesses and communication systems are on an international scale, meaning increasingly globalised calls for universities to graduate students that are well versed on an international global level. Bates (p.45, 2005) stressed the effects of the social aspects on the internationalised curriculum and put forth three suggestions that every internationalised curriculum should have. First, the curriculum is innately hegemonic and, for social justice reasons, the subjugated knowledges of people at the margins of our awareness must be integrated. Second, internationalising the curriculum involves crossing borders both within and across societies and cultures. Third, the pursuit of the global curriculum depends on our commitment to freedom and inclusion which grows out of our recognition of the need to rescue society and personality from the ravages of the global market.

The demands for internationalising of curricula in HEIs, based upon the potential that a globalised curriculum would have to connect institutional agendas across borders, has increased (Absalom et al., 2006). The aim is for all students to live effectively in a globalised world, as professionals or as citizens, and this is a common goal for internationalisation.HEIs involved in internationalisation processes should graduate students who have an international global education and perspective, and who are ready to work within, and are able to adapt to, the increasingly interconnected yet divided world. For the university to graduate such students, it has to be through an internationalised curriculum. This also needs to be reflected through a well-developed internationalisation policy, clearly translated across the curriculum, so they can reach students. This often presents problems for some universities (Leask, 2014). For example, in some universities the board of administration focuses on teaching in English but rarely in all majors, and the connection between teaching in English and the achievement of international and intercultural learning outcomes is not clear. In other cases, the focus of globalisation of the curriculum may be primarily on content through the specialised optional international modules, and in others on increasing student diversity in the classroom and on campus, without considering how this will internationalise student learning (Leask, 2014). The internationalised curriculum should focus on student learning, which happens in two steps. First, learning must happen within the context of the different cultures and practices of knowing, doing, and being in that particular environment. Second HEIs need to have the right experts who have the experience, skills, and knowledge to construct the perfect internationalised curriculum. In addition, knowing how to assist all students in achieving the outcomes defined in the curriculum is just as important. Finally, it is to be noted that the internationalisation of the curriculum in policy and practice is always, or at least most of the time, focused on inputs rather than the curriculum’s output (Leask, 2014).

There are various approaches to the internationalisation of the curriculum. Some universities seek to gain advantage in a competitive environment by offering a curriculum relevant to a larger number of students worldwide (Laughton and Ottewill, 2000; Whalley, 1997). On the other hand, some universities go with a more ideological approach of teaching students what is important, such as lifelong learning skills for the largely unknown, but increasingly connected, future world to better prepare them for global life (Laughton and Ottewill, 2000; Whalley, 1997). It is important to recognize these different approaches to know exactly how the curriculum is developed. According to Edwards (2003), the process of developing the curriculum needs to have three levels: level one international awareness, level two, international competence, and level three international expertise. The idea behind the internationalisation of the curriculum comes as a response to, or is in line with, the internationalisation of society. Some traditionalists such as Bridges (2000) argue that researchers need to focus solely on the disciplinary content of any programme in any institution (Laughton and Ottewill, 2000; Whalley, 1997). Bridges stresses the point of defining the meaning of curriculum. However, many universities and academia experts claim that knowledge of the disciplinary content is not enough on its own. The curriculum needs to be considered not only in terms of its content but also the teaching and learning approaches within it.

The methods and equipment of delivering the content is deemed as significant as the disciplinary content itself (Pegg, 2013). For example, some claim that engineering students, who are used to a problem-based approach, are more ready for the working environment, than those who are textbook trained, but unfamiliar with solving problems (Seidel and Godfrey, 2005). Moreover, one education specialist encourages thinking about the way the curriculum is built. Universities must think about all dimensions of the curriculum in the internationalisation process, which include: the structure of programmes to be taught, approaches to teaching and learning, and precise and detailed disciplinary content. In the case of producing an internationalised curriculum, it is important to analyse what good practice already exists and where the gaps are in that system (Magne, 2013). Magne developed an analysis tool to examine those gaps and to fix them. His tool asks questions such as ‘to what extent does your programme embed examples, materials, resources from a range of cultures in the curriculum?’, ‘what are the teaching and learning activities designed to enhance social integration?’, and ‘what opportunities are in place for international research collaborations?’. Having identified all these points of analysis the curriculum development team sits together to share their knowledge, and ideas together to create the globalised curriculum for their graduates (Magne, 2013). The experience gained from the involvement in using the analysis tool indicates that, in addition to much needed cultural consciousness, academic administrators also benefit from reviewing a range of examples of already established and beneficial internationalised curricula to help them to begin with their own (Magne, 2013).

Several of the successful paths to internationalisation of the curriculum form the basis of ideas which address teaching and learning approaches, skills development, peer learning, use of alumni and social integration, to name a few, all of which will determine the success of a truly internationalised curriculum (Magne, 2013). One method to internationalising the curriculum is to enhance interaction in the classroom by using the students themselves as a resource. This is called the peer assisted learning system, where both local and international students have an equal role to play, and all students must adapt to unfamiliar teaching styles from several different perspectives. The curriculum that focuses on the peer assisted learning system encompasses the whole student experience. Many experts refer to this particular curriculum as the ‘co-curricular’ approach, arguing that rather than seeing every activity as extra-curricular, it is important to view every activity as essential part of the students’ growth and development. For example, Plymouth University uses the peer assisted system, it runs in over 60 programmes that are integral to the architecture of those degrees. At the end of year, the peer assisted report indicates enhancement in employability skills for the system leaders particularly in organisational management, communication, and teamwork. It notes the support that the peer assisted learning provides for the internationalisation agenda and also for transition to postgraduate Masters’ courses. This focuses on issues such as: isolation, being an overseas student, and understanding university academic culture. Here the learning is a two-way process (Study-in UK, 2018). As mentioned, students' international learning experiences are also influenced by co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. International house gatherings and volunteer opportunities, international week, international student orientation, conferences organised by clubs and student groups, concerts, sports, and other cultural activities are examples of co-curricular interactions.

However, the results of research on co-curricular activities are mixed. Grayson (2004) compared the academic and social experiences of foreign and domestic first-year students at four Canadian universities and found a connection between their level of participation and educational outcomes. Grayson (2004) discovered that foreign students were as interested in co-curricular activities as domestic students were, but that those co-curricular activities, such as living in residence, had no significant connection with educational outcomes. According to the ACE (2005) report that focused on Canada, participation in co-curricular activities is minimal. Other responsibilities such as work, family, and a lack of time, as well as rivalry among the various campus activities, were cited as reasons for the low participation.

Many students, in interviews conducted for the University of British Columbia's "Global Citizens' Project", said that living in campus residences and engaging in residence programmes improved their knowledge of different cultures and made them better global citizens (University of British Columbia, 2004). When students gain an understanding of other countries and cultures, it has far-reaching consequences. As participating students rise to positions of leadership in their home and host countries, international awareness is critical not only for students' personal and professional growth, but also for the development of life-long friendships, the development of sustainable economies, and the promotion of greater cooperation and understanding among nations. According to Murphy (2007), students who learn the skills deemed appropriate for the modern workforce and global circumstances are better prepared to contribute positively to local, state, national, and international development.

The process and development of internationalising the curriculum requires a major institutional change. Those who have taken the decision to start this venture, try to affect and manage change at five levels: the class, course, staff, department, and university. All HEIs looking to internationalise their curriculum aim at having their students graduating with certain qualities. The literature shows that a graduate from an international curriculum should display the following characteristics (Leask, 2015): a) a willingness to think globally and inclusively and be able to consider issues from a variety of perspectives and worldviews; b) be aware of the implications of local decisions and actions for international contexts and communities and of international developments, decisions and actions for local communities and contexts; c) be aware of own cultural tradition and its perspectives in relation to other cultures and their perspectives; d) appreciate the relation between his/her field of study locally and professional traditions elsewhere; e) appreciate and apply international standards and practices within his/her discipline or professional area; f) appreciate the importance of multicultural diversity to professional practice and citizenship; g) accept and value diversity in language and culture; h) understand the basic tenets of different world views; i) see the world as other conceive it; j) appreciate the complex and interacting factors that contribute to notions of culture and cultural relationships and k) recognise intercultural issues relevant to professional practice.

To generate such graduates, it is argued that faculty must change their ways of approaching a class. Internationalisation requires a shift in the content and style of teaching and learning (Delors, 1998). All universities must design the whole curriculum with the needs and demand of every international student at the centre because students tend to have majors in so many different departments or schools. This is easy to put on paper and extremely difficult to put into practice. Many regulations need to be addressed to adapt to international employment as well as contracts in different languages and environments that respect cultural diversities. The phrase 'international student' includes students or individuals with various diversities ranging from prior experiences to skills and expectations (Haigh, 2002). This implies teaching to the lowest common denominator. In reality, it means raising the standard of teaching above the normal of a narrow local curriculum. The situation creates opportunities to build on a wider range of student life experiences and skills (Ryan, 2000). For example, there is great scope for social geographers to embrace multiculturalism and to celebrate globalisation, especially in the context of a multicultural society like in the United Kingdom (Waddington, 2001).

Unfortunately, staff adaptiveness and development towards this new idea of internationalisation has many problems. Tensions between universal ambitions and local actualities obstructs internationalisation from taking place (Haigh, 2002). This is one of the reasons why many curricula are unconsciously filled with local traditions, norms and values. For example, The Open University, Britain’s largest university by far, worries that its curriculum is ‘widely perceived as predominantly white and Eurocentric and as such fails even to represent the diversity of culture and experiences in modern England’ (Kelly, 2000). In the academic field, a closely related problem always arises between the consequential and social exclusion of the disadvantaged students, which are the international students dominated by local group of students that are the majority in the university (Haigh, 2002). Many believe that internationalisation of the curriculum needs to involve rethinking the presumptions of course design, the character of the course content and the language used in its delivery (Haigh, 2002).

For those trying to install an internationalised curriculum, Morey suggests they use one of five models for developing a curriculum (cited in Haigh, 2002). The first model is to bring international students up to speed with the dominant culture they are in, including remedial work such as language training. For example, the Institute of Art in Bulgaria takes foreign students as part of its exchange programme for one year. It teaches those students Bulgarian language and culture and also some technical background so that they are able to continue their studies in Bulgarian universities and HE system. The second model is educating students about cultural pluralism. The university must provide all students with courses that grant all students the opportunity to learn about different cultures, norms, practices, and values. They examine different traditions and the best way to co-exist. The third model is all about benevolent multicultural segregation or in other words separate departments. This model intends to preserve diversity and pluralism as well as different traditions. This is often associated with minority groups as they are taught as separate but equal alternatives to the dominant culture at the university. The fourth model concentrates on bicultural education were the dominant culture and the strongest minority culture is taken, and the cultural teaching will focus mainly on these two. This method reflects the situation in the USA where universities face problems reconciling the Anglo and the Hispanic students. The fifth and last model is multicultural education, this model is based on the notion that all are multicultural, just operating in a domestic area or work or leisure, and that coexisting skills are not learnt in the education system. Every approach has its pros and cons, however, model number five, Multicultural Education and, for logistic reasons, model number four: Bicultural Education, seem to be the least problematic. Model four allows the possibility that the globalised curriculum can be tailored to meet, equally, the educational needs of just two source traditions, rather than a larger range, while model five aims to develop a curriculum profoundly based in multicultural team and project work which creates cross cultural collaboration (Haigh, 2002).

## 2.5 Critiques and potential dangers of internationalisation

While internationalisation of HE has become more globally acclaimed (Jiang, 2008), despite its prominence, the process has received criticism. Although the literature is limited on this topic, below are outlined some of the critical perspectives and dangers of internationalisation. The internationalisation concept has an evident and clear link with international power and dominance (Jiang, 2008). As Teichler noted in 1996, “at any event it should make us suspicious that the most powerful actors, and the most likely winners, praise internationalisation of HE almost unconditionally, and push aside the anxieties of less powerful actors” (cited in Enders and Fulton, 2002, p. 4). In fact, most of the voices advocating internationalisation are from western countries, particularly those in the OECD countries, supported by the WTO (which has non-western countries but western influence). As such, countries belonging to the developing world face the challenges of internationalisation at “a critical moment of national transformation” (Jiang, 2008, p. 352). According to Enders and Fulton (2002, p.4), these countries are confronted with three major pressures: (1) to endorse the further expansion and ‘nationalisation’ of their system of HE, (2) to redefine its role and situation within the regional context, and (3) to battle with the effects of the global forces encountered. Therefore, these conditions strengthen the power of developed countries (particularly the western countries) and can potentially lead to a neo-colonialisation of HE because of the increasing inequalities between the rich and powerful universities and the poorer and less-resourced universities (Jiang, 2008). In such an unequal market, some countries are marginalised and denied the right to have an input in the development of the curriculum, quality standards and other elements of HE (Altbach, 2002).

Moreover, internationalisation has been criticised for imposing values, and uniform standards and paradigms, which may not be appropriate in certain contexts (Pring, 2002). Similarly, Findlow and Hayes (2016) explained that this process often considers native and local values and systems to be deficient and these systems are often judged based on the receptiveness of the country exporting its values through internationalisation. This often leads to universities losing their native cultures and linguistic functionality (Findlow and Hayes, 2016). Internationalisation can also lead to rising tensions between striving to achieve international standards while at the same time preparing graduating students for the local labour market in which the institution is based. Moreover, the internationalisation processes may also tighten the criteria for admitting local students to raise the international prestige of the university (Findlow and Hayes, 2016).

In addition, as the internationalisation of HE is being recognised as a new dimension of commodification and marketisation, economic drivers for pursuing internationalisation take the lead over political, academic, or cultural/social drivers (Jiang, 2008). As such, HE, labelled as ‘a multi-billion-dollar industry’, is recognized as ‘a new source of profit’ (Asmal, 2003; Jiang, 2008). Furthermore, this manifestation is supported by the WTO’s definition of HE as a service like any other service and is reinforced in the GATS. However, considering HE simply as a service or a commodity has proven to be problematic. Alec Erwin, the Minister of Trade and Industry in South Africa, noted that “knowledge is not a commodity and can never be one. Knowledge is distillation of human endeavour, and it is the most profound collective good that there is” (Asmal, 2003, p. 3). He argues that the novel trend of commodification and privatisation of knowledge will lead to a growing loss in the collective knowledge base as it ‘distances itself from that collective wellbeing’ (Asmal, 2003, 3). Similarly, Altbach (2002) noted that the world would be poorer if knowledge becomes organised through a standardised system that is controlled by the West. Altbach also argues that HE cannot be considered as a commodity as it is a central part of a culture and society. HE is argued to have a key role in promoting equity, development, justice and democracy, and in fostering the values of democracy, creating critical citizens, as well as shaping new generations of thinkers and actors (Asmal, 2003). As such, during the implementation of internationalisation processes in HE, the national culture, current and future needs cannot be easily sacrificed because the WTO advocates freer trade and the GATS legalises it (Jiang, 2008). This free trade implies a pursuit of money and profit instead of enlightenment. Altbach (2013) also draws attention to a new movement away from an academic culture that is separated from business toward a culture with a growing emphasis on entrepreneurial activities. These activities include two common indicators (1) recruitment of growing number of international students and (2) increase in the number of branch campuses (Altbach, 2013). Similar to Peterson (2013), Altbach (2013) outlines HE as a public good, suggesting that focus of internationalisation as a public good is decreasing and is being replaced by motives and incentives from private enterprises, challenging academic staff involved in the internationalisation processes to pay attention to the domination of financial motivations.

Altbach (2013) also argues that changes to the academic profession have led to a decline in the quality of education for the growing numbers of students, as internationalisation can threaten academic freedom and salaries. Moreover, Altbach points to the growing inequality in education access caused by internationalisation. As he notes, with the increase in global population, a growing number of tertiary qualified students have less access to HE. As such, the response to this issue is mass HE or as he refers to it, “massification” (Altbach, 2013, p.8). This phenomenon in HE arises from the fact that developed and developing countries are working to meet the educational needs of a rapidly growing number of students, which has increased 53% in the past decade. Altbach (2013) further argues that massification leads to lower quality of education and a rise in the rates of student dropouts, particularly in developing countries. He urges the use of accreditation networks and quality assurance indicators to monitor the internationalisation process and keep it within the right track to allow for a more engaged, fair, and responsive internationalisation policies.

Peterson et al. (2014) criticise internationalisation and describe how globalisation has changed the priorities of HE, which has been evident through both individual and institutional contributions to internationalisation within campuses (for example, from faculty-to-faculty collaborations to institution-to-institution level approaches). The growing institutional activities often lead to the development of inclusive internationalisation strategies that are driven by several factors including: financial drivers, competition and prestige, governmental pressures, and a movement advocating for the greater good of public higher education. In fact, Peterson et al. (2014, p. 4), understands the “greater good” as the responsibility of HE to let go the interest of individual institutions and move forward towards tackling global issues that affect humankind. This matches with the values of the international education that originated from the Fulbright educational exchange programmes. However, this concept has been increasingly subverted by profit and competitive purposes and thus the authors challenge researchers to employ a critical perspective in understanding the motivations behind the growing internationalisation activities in HE. Peterson et al. (2014) briefly discuss the effects of internationalisation on global social justice, issues of equity, access, and diversity of global education. They see institutions, at the individual level, as the main actors responsible for creating internationalisation policies and partnerships. Moreover, the creation of these new policies needs to cautiously balance between three potentially conflicting goals: diversity, profit and the greater good of public HE, which will address the global social justice issues. For this to be accomplished, institutions ought to identify mechanisms and approaches that enable transparency and ethics during all steps of the internationalisation policy process (development, implementation, assessment and reporting).

In addition, the internationalisation of HE is often considered as a concept whose direction is influenced by geographical borders (Jiang, 2008). However, its effects are at times independent from spatial mapping. As explained by Jiang (2008) “inside the boundaries there is a fluidity of movement and there are changes that are not geographical” (p. 353). For instance, an international or external student may later become a permanent or internal resident. Thus, while the status may have changed, the background did not. Moreover, while the literature considers international students as external individuals from outside the boarders, in fact, the boarders are permeable, and the geographical framework is limited (Jiang, 2008). International students comprise a key element of internationalisation processes on campus (Salt, 2001). Under globalisation, there has also been a significant increase in immigrant students. This raises the following question for Jiang (2008): what is the impact of immigrant student on internationalisation of HE? Generally, both immigrant and foreign students who come from an English-speaking country carry their own cultures, and consequently face challenges in coping with the new environment (Jiang, 2008). In fact, Knight (1997) recognises that internationalisation is not limited to the “international” external to the nation but can also comprise what is internal within the nation. As she noted “it is short-sighted to think of internationalisation as only a geographically based concept (meaning outside our own borders or between/among different countries)” (Knight, 1997, p. 8). As such, one can agree that both ‘internal international’ and ‘external international’ students are a consequence of globalisation. And these two groups are different, but both groups are bearers of their culture and must cope with life between the host culture and their own. Hence, in response to globalisation, internationalisation strategies ought to consider the needs and interests of these two groups in countries where immigration has a substantial impact on who attends universities (Jiang, 2008).

## 2.6 Internationalisation of Education from a Lebanese Perspective

Currently, there is little research on internationalisation in the Lebanese HE system, although the concept has been present in the country since the establishment of foreign universities. No published articles discuss the dimensions of internationalisation, the factors affecting international trade in HE services and the four modes of supply. The topic was first tackled at the level of universities by masters’ students doing their theses. The first workshop on internationalisation was held by the American University of Beirut in 2019 and more research has been undertaken on internationalisation and globalisation in the education sector. A master’s thesis was completed in Kassel University in Germany on the internationalisation in Lebanese universities in the context of an internship at the National Tempus Office in Beirut. The study was accomplished with the support of the Higher Education Reform Experts team. The focus of the study was the rationales, strategies and challenges faced among the Lebanese HEI. Quantitative data was collected from university catalogues for the academic year 2010/2011 and their websites, while qualitative data was collected from interviews with university staff including the vice president for Planning and Educational Research and the Dean of the faculty of Business Administration, the Dean of the faculty of Sciences and Humanities and the International Office Director from various universities (Maroun, 2012). The results of the study indicated that universities are keen to internationalise to be able to meet global standards, to compete with foreign universities and ensure quality education. Universities are very enthusiastic and interested in opening up to the global higher education arena. However, there is lack of a regulative framework and strategic planning. They receive minimal support from the Lebanese government which leaves them isolated in face of fierce global educational competition (Maroun, 2012). A study on the influence of globalisation on HE and its potential in Lebanon also targeted internationalisation in the study. The twentieth century witnessed a flow of knowledge, values, people, technology, and ideas across borders, and it left a great impact on human life in every aspect. This century was known to be the century of global schooling and educational mobility. Internationalisation was seen at home and abroad and it was believed Lebanon could benefit from all levels of internationalisation since it could be the leader in importing as well as exporting higher education. It could use its experience to ensure good quality of education and benefit from its cultural diversity and dynamic society in order to become provider of education serving the region (Nabih and Riad, 2012).

As mentioned above, the first workshop on internationalisation in HE in Lebanon was held by the office of International Programs at the American University of Beirut in 2019. It was a collaborative workshop between AUB, USJ, LAU, USEK and the Lebanese University to exchange best practice, the strategies used, and challenges faced in the field of international HE. The workshop composed of three main sessions: the first session was focused mainly on the challenges faced and maintenance of international partnerships; the second session focused on studying abroad and how to ensure transfer and equivalence of courses, immigration, and funding opportunities; and the third session targeted international student services. The workshop provided a great opportunity for these universities to learn from each other, plan collaborative efforts to strengthen the field of international higher education and develop best places (AUB website, 2020). Although various forms of internationalisation activities are being carried out on an institutional level (please refer to chapter 1 for examples of those activities), it is very clear that some measures need to be taken by the Lebanese state to provide a regulatory framework for the internationalisation of higher education institutions. This would ensure the quality of foreign students, support the universities in general, and confirm sustainable development of internationalised higher education system.

## 2.7 Conclusion

HE is expanding significantly in this so-called century of knowledge. Students try, by all means possible, to obtain the education they desire. Due to the high demand for HE, universities compete to offer the best quality of knowledge, latest technologies, good tuition fees and many other benefits to students in order to attract them to join their institution. This is the case in the wider region as well as in Lebanon. For universities to cope with the situation, they pursue internationalisation in a hope that it will create added value for the institution and increase the number of students applying. Moreover, a key element of internationalisation should be an internationalised curriculum and strategy to adjust to all the foreign students coming from abroad to get an international education. Internationalisation is considered a holistic approach that includes implementation of various processes to ensure that objectives and requirements of the education system is fully fulfilled (Tam, 2001). In Lebanon, there is minimal research on the topic which provides the rationale for the current study. The following chapter will focus on the context of HE in Lebanon to better understand what the country is going through.

# Chapter 3: Context of Higher Education in Lebanon

This chapter will focus on the context of higher education in Lebanon. Although Lebanon has faced many economic and political challenges, the education sector remains a top priority among the Lebanese families. The sector itself has played a vital role in generating money by attracting students from across the region. The first HEI in Lebanon dates back to 1866, after which many universities followed, and the country was turned to be an education hub in the region. In Lebanon there are two types of universities: public and private. There is only one public university which is the Lebanese University. Universities have various departments including research, finance, governance, and quality assurance which help them develop and compete with the outside world.



## 3.1 Introduction

HE is an inseparable process of attaining knowledge and skills and consolidating social status. The attainment of knowledge and skills has been an essential factor in economic development and thus attempts to eradicate poverty across all regions of the world and at all developmental stages. Lebanon as a country has faced political and economic instability over decades which has impeded the Lebanese government in delineating its strategic vision for education, particularly for HE (Nahas, 2009). Despite all the challenges faced, Lebanon has been known as having the oldest higher education system in the region which goes back to 1866 (Nahas, 2009). Before that date, students aiming to continue their education were obliged to travel abroad to get their degree. In a country like Lebanon with limited natural resources, the HE system has played a vital role in generating money for the country, comparable to the way other Arab countries produce oil to make profit. Even in the most unstable situations, including the civil unrest from 1975 up until 1990, Lebanon was known as the “University of the East” (Al-Jack, 2005). Unlike many countries in the world, in Lebanon public higher education system followed the private system, which played a very important role in constructing the nation’s educational capital. Regardless of the challenges faced, the HE system was able to fulfil the need of the Lebanese students by providing them with knowledge, scientific and technical competencies (Khoury, 2013). To understand the context of the higher education; political, historical and socio-economic factors should be outlined which help explain the reasons behind the struggles of the HE system in Lebanon.

## 3.2 History of Higher Education in Lebanon

1. Early Stages: The establishment of universities

Missionaries were the ones who structured the modern educational base in the country, which further led to the establishment of Syrian Evangelical College in 1866 which in the year 1920 came to be known as the American University of Beirut (AUB). Several years after the establishment of AUB, Saint Joseph University (USJ) was founded by the Society of Jesus to challenge the Protestant influence followed by the Lebanese American University (LAU) in 1885. The Lebanese University, which was founded in 1951, remains the only public university in the country (EACEA, 2017). These main universities attracted students from middle to higher-class families with a very small percentage from the poorer classes. Beirut was considered the intellectual pole that attracted students from the region and the world. These universities have contributed enormously to the building of educational systems in the country, but they were definably not establishing a uniform national Lebanese culture. On the contrary, they were propagating foreign dogmas (Barakat, 1993). During this time, with all the efforts put into the private HE system in the country, the political regime moved towards the French republic and later to the national one in 1943. In the Middle East region, Lebanon was considered an education hub before the civil war (Bachour, 2005). The Lebanese education system was able to attract students from the region and specifically from the nearby Arab countries. The international students were attracted by the country’s living standards, its open society and cultural diversity. In contrast to the other twenty-one Arab countries in the region, Lebanon allows freedom of speech and free will of expression since it is a democratic political system with more westernized characteristics, while the Arab countries are more conservative and traditional (Dirani, 2006). A year before the civil unrest in the country, the percentage of foreign students across all higher education institutions was 57%. After almost 20 years, the percentage decreased to 23% in the academic year 1993-1994 and later declined to 10% in the academic year 2003-2004. This is because many universities started to be established in the Arab world and foreign students preferred to get their degree from their own country (Bachour, 2005).

1. Later stages: the Civil War

The first law that was issued for regulating HE systems in Lebanon was in 1961. It consists of 28 articles describing establishment conditions, degree obtaining specifications, legal framework for running higher education institutions, and penalties of breaching the law. In 1975 the fifteen-year civil war started in the country and affected the structure and foundations of existing universities (Bachour, 2005). Since regions in the country and the population itself was divided; universities were obliged to open branches to cater for all their students. In addition to that, new HEIs emerged which took the advantage of the war and absence of the law to work without a license. In addition, although Lebanon was an educational centre in the region, the onset of political instability in the country led to drop in the number of international students enrolled in Lebanese higher education institutions (Nahas, 2009).

1. Current stages: Post War

During the post war period, the number of HEIs expanded and value of education increased. In 1996, a new decree law was issued to put in place the standards, the conditions, and the criteria of establishing a higher education institution. After the establishment of the decree law and normalisation of the situation, new colleges and institutions were licensed, new departments emerged, and the overall number of students increased from 82,446 from the academic year 1995-1996 to 180,850 at the end of 2019 according to the national Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD). This increase can be linked either to the emergence of a new curriculum within the educational system adopted by the Ministry of Education followed by the relative ease of students passing their official exams (Al-Jack, 2005), or to the increase in the demand for higher education globally (Bachour, 2005; Dill, 2007). Demand for HE has increased due to demand for, and competition within, the market for highly skilled young graduates that are equipped with technical skills and technological advancements. Students eagerly want to gain the private benefits delivered to them within this environment (Dill, 2007). Hence, within this changing environment owners of the HEIs, along with the government, must ensure the quality of the education and sustain the national identity of the institutions (Kinser, 2014).

In Lebanon, religious and political figures play a key role in the HE sector since those institutions are either managed or owned by them, and most of the time, they have the full control over the institutions and resist any change. Almost all private universities in Lebanon are under religious influence. The American University of Beirut was founded by the American Evangelical Mission, St Joseph University was founded by the Society of Jesus, Beirut Arab University by the Sunni Moslem charitable association, and University of Balamand by the Greek Orthodox Church and so on. The Lebanese government is very cautious in forcing any measures on those universities because any proposed change can be thought of as an act of intrusion in their internal affairs and as such considered an intrusion to the affairs of the religion. Institutional challenges that hinder the Lebanese HE system from development are 1) the public Lebanese university is weaker than the private universities with respect to its capacity to provide high quality services and financial capacity, 2) there is no political will to enact new policies to implement reforms and 3) there is no education vision in Lebanon. All these factors are damaging, particularly to the less privileged citizens. The sectarian system of governance in Lebanon paves the way for political interference in all sectors, thus creating a conflict of interest between the political leaders and business owners (Robalino and Sayed, 2012).

## 3.3 The Lebanese crisis and COVID-19 pandemic in 2020

In light of the economic crisis, political instability, and COVID-19 pandemic, higher education in Lebanon encountered several challenges and went into a deep crisis (El-Ghali and Nauffal, 2020). In these unprecedented circumstances, the future of internationalisation of HE in Lebanon remains uncertain. Since October 2019, Lebanon has encountered the gradual disintegration of public and private institutions leading to a struggling economy (El-Ghali and Nauffal, 2020). The latter marked the Lebanese revolution against corruption in the country. Right after that, the COVID-19 pandemic was catastrophic for the struggling Lebanese economy, due to the urgent need for lockdown. Following the emergency response to the pandemic, educational institutions in Lebanon shifted towards online teaching, and most of the international students returned to their home countries (Nauffal, 2020). The recent economic crisis, political instability and COVID-19 outbreak in Lebanon threaten the aspirations of many international students to get enrolled in private Lebanese Universities for the academic year 2020-2021 (Nauffal, 2020). Usually, international students seek economically and politically stable countries to earn their higher education (Nahas, 2009). Yet, the internationalisation process in Lebanon remains substantially threatened due to political unrest and the health crisis.

## 3.4 Types of Higher Education Institutions

In Lebanon, the education system is supervised by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE). Under the direct supervision of MEHE, the Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD) conducts research and generates statistical reports to help with investments and decision-making. The 45 private higher education institutions are under the direct regulation of the Directorate General for Higher Education (DGHE), which was established in 2002 to supervise and coordinate actions among universities. The only university that is not under the control of DGHE is the Lebanese public university, where the Minister of Education and Higher Education and the Council of Ministers manage the governing system of this university, including the president and the council of Deans. The Lebanese HE system is composed of three different types of institution: a university, a university college or a university institute for religious studies. For an institution to be called a university, it should contain at least three faculties and it is necessary to have humanities and sciences faculties. Those can grant degrees at any level from bachelor to doctoral degrees, However, university colleges and university institutes for religious studies can only grant bachelor degrees and they can only deliver higher degrees once the Ministry of Education and Higher Education gives permission. The majority of the universities (75%) are full universities in Lebanon with only seven being university colleges (15%), three university institutes for religious studies (7%) and only one state university. Some of these institutions are for profit and others not-for profit, some are owned by individuals, religious figures or a political party as shown in Figure 3.1 below.

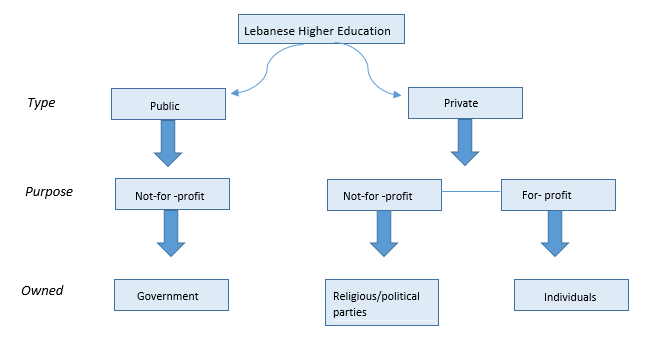


Figure 3.1: Higher Education System in Lebanon

## 3.5 Students and staff

Data compiled from 2010 showed that the number of students is increasing mainly in the private education sector, while the number enrolled in the Lebanese University is almost constant. Data from UNDP showed that the percentage of students enrolling in tertiary education has decreased from 54% in 2010 to 48% in 2013 and later to 43% in 2016. Although the country is witnessing decline in the gross enrolment rate for tertiary education, it still has, on average, more than the double of students in other Arab countries (Kawar and Tzannatos, 2013). Research should be conducted to know the reasons why students are not preferring to join tertiary education. With all of the challenges faced, and as a percentage of the population, Lebanon generates the highest proportion of bachelor degrees and university graduates in Middle East. The main concern remains on the quality of higher education system and ability to retain universities’ reputations in the region (Kawar and Tzannatos, 2013). In the academic year 2009-2010, students preferred to enrol in social sciences, business, and law faculties (39%) followed by the humanities and arts faculties (21%) (Yaacoub and Badre, 2012). A similar trend was observed in 2015-16, where 33% of the students were enrolled in the business and law faculties. Table 3.1 below represents the number of students in the last few academic years and the distribution among public and private institutions.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Year*** | **Total # of students** | **Total # of students in the Lebanese University** | **Total # of students in private institutions** | **Total # of foreign student (in private and public)** |
| *2009-2010* | 180,850 | 72,813 | 108,037 | 29,361 |
| *2010-2011* | 192,138 | 72,507 | 119,631 | 31912 |
| *2011-2012* | 192,522 | 73,698 | 118,824 | 26233 |
| *2012-2013* | 191,788 | 71,440 | 120,348 | - |
| *2014-2015* | 190,157 | 69,994 | 120,163 | 21,359 |
| *2015-2016* | 199,679 | 72,518 | 127,161 | 19,621 |

Data compiled from CERD website, www.crdp.org

Table 3.1: Distribution of students in the Lebanese higher education institutions

The HE system in Lebanon should play a vital role in supplying suitably qualified graduates whose skills match the demand for such skills in the market (now and crucially in the future), and help to resolve the problem of unemployment in the country. Based on the Lebanese Centre for Policy Studies (LCPS) data, university graduates compose of the 30% of those who are seeking a job (Kawar and Tzannatos, 2013). The problem that exists within the country is the gap between the increased number of highly skilled graduates from universities and the skills or the jobs that the market requires. This prevents young graduating students from finding jobs in the Lebanese labour market that fits their qualifications. Numbers from CERD confirm the increase in the number of Lebanese students enrolled in the HEIs and a decrease in the total number of foreign students who are taking the jobs of the Lebanese young graduates and steps need to be taken to eradicate this problem.

To be eligible and to be accepted to any university in Lebanon, a student should pass the Lebanese Baccalaureate and pass the American Scholastic Assessment either I or II (SAT I or SAT II). The universities are free to choose the system they would like to follow since they have the full autonomy. Some follow the European 3-cycle system and majority follow the American credit system. There are also different requirements as admission rules are set by the universities, such as the entrance exam, TOEFL, EEE and many others. In most of the times these tests are placement tests and are composed of English and Math parts. Even the curriculum of different programmes and degrees is set at each institutional level and there is no common national framework to be followed. The only faculty that the government intervenes is the law faculty, where there are 12 courses that must be included in every single curriculum at any university in the country whether public or private. These courses are designed by academic staff at the Lebanese University.

The proportion of the academic and administrative staff should be proportionate to the number of students attending HEIS. Since the number of students is increasing so the number of staff- academic and administrative - is also increasing. The rate of increase is measured by the CERD, and it is estimated to be, on a yearly average, 10% among academic staff and 14% among administrative staff. In Lebanon, the student-teaching ratio is very low compared to other OECD member countries at 12:1 in 2013; for every 12 students there is one instructor. Among the 34 OECD member countries; the ratio is 16:1 and in the United Kingdom, it is 18:1 on average. In the academic years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 the ratios were 10:1 and 9.5:1 respectively (OECD, 2013). Table 3.2 (below) shows the number of academic and administrative staff for the past years.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Year*** | **Total # of instructors in higher education system** | **Total # of instructors in private universities** | **Total # of administrative staff in higher education system** | **Total # of administrative staff in private universities** |
| *2006-2007* | 13,556 | 8,979 | 4,511 | 2,799 |
| *2007-2008* | 14,608 | 9,352 | 5,064 | 3,224 |
| *2009-2010* | 16,387 | 11,161 | 5,826 | 3933 |
| *2010-2011* | 17,279 | 10,303 | 6,332 | 4,260 |
| *2011-2012* | 19,186 | 12,485 | 6,478 | 4,327 |
| *2012-2013* | 20,082 | 13,042 | 6,455 | 4,273 |

Data compiled from CERD website, www.crdp.org

Table 3.2: Number of Academic and Administrative staff in Lebanese Higher Education

There are four basic positions at the academic level for the teaching staff: instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, and professor. This classification comes from international institutions and is not bound to any national system. It is based on years of experience in addition to the degree attained. The “instructor” position is for those lecturers who have experience but no doctorate. Those who have a PhD will get promoted to the “assistant professor” position and after years of experience in the department, they will get the positions “associate professor” and then full “professor” positions. The main difference between those positions is that assistant professors have a requisite number of classes and student supervisions and provide support to professors of the faculty. The associate professor’s role is quite different than that of assistant professor. They have a specified number of classes to teach but also are required to attend a number of seminars and conferences, conduct research and supervise students. They also need to give advice to teaching assistants and do some administrative tasks. Professors provide academic leadership in the university through participating in policy development, teaching, professional activities and fostering excellence in research. Only a limited number of faculties or fields offer PhD programmes in Lebanon across the private and public institutions. There are a few doctoral programmes at the Lebanese University, American University of Beirut and Saint Joseph University. There are also joint PhD programmes with the schools outside Lebanon at international level such as with Canada, the USA and France.

## 3.6 Main departments

1. International relations and research

Being involved in the research and undertaking research activities, is one of the main responsibilities of the university, and it is based on the funding opportunities of the institution. The National Council for Scientific Research is the organisation at national level that supports associated research units and sometimes offers funds to other research projects. At university level, each university has established its own unit to promote research studies. These research units help the universities develop their research profiles in various subjects and various faculties. They pave the way for students to pursue PhD degrees using the research done at that unit or using the resources of the research unit to continue their higher education degree. At the American University of Beirut, there is the Issam Fares Institute (IFI) for public policy and international affairs, an independent research-based institute that was inaugurated in 2006 with the aim to develop policy-related research in and about the region. At the Balamand University, the Economics and Capital Markets Research Centre (ECMRC) was established to undertake research activities and reduce the gap between the real market needs of the financial sector and the theoretical knowledge gained at the university. The aim is to connect the business world to the academic sector. Many of the Lebanese researchers participate in research funded regionally or internationally such as from USAID or European Union (EU), and they also work with research units that they have worked in during their PhD preparation (Tempus, 2012). The majority of the Lebanese universities participate in international cooperation programmes such as the Tempus and Erasmus Mundus project and CEDRE programme which is a cooperation between France and Lebanon.

1. Admission and student affairs

Each institution has its own way of delivering services to students. Usually, they have an office for student affairs for academic services and social clubs for anything related to the wellbeing of students. Most of the time all the information about the services and admission rules would be offered on the official website of the university. Other than the student affairs office, almost all universities try to support their students with some tutoring tips on their English courses or paper writing and often provide their students with employment opportunities within their libraries. In addition to that, they tend to link the new graduates to their alumni for later career guidance. Although there are student associations in all universities to help the sophomore and junior class students, most of them are politically oriented, and most of the time, they lack any discussion about the development of the HEI or HE system (Tempus, 2012).

1. Finance

The only university that receives full financial support from the government is the Lebanese University where the students are enrolled with a minimum tuition fee. By contrast, in private institutions the tuition fees represent a key source for the HEI’s funding and sustainability. They also receive financial support from their alumni and other international or local donors. For this reason, these institutions are free to set their tuition fees without entering into any discussions with the state. Recognising the increase in tuition fees, these universities often provide scholarships to students with the highest grades. All Lebanese universities have found ways of getting funds from either nationals or internationals. Universities following the American model - mainly AUB and LAU- get gifts and donations from the rent of buildings, programmes, and equipment. In 2015 alone, these two universities got around $17 million from the USAID (USAID, 2015). Other French model universities receive different types of donations, and it might be through the provision of technical material or professors. Many political or charitable organisations along with foreign governments provide scholarships to students and this is the case with Walid Bin Talal foundation, Issam Fares Institute and Rafic Hariri foundation. Other universities who belong to religious communities meet the labour costs for their religious staff who teach within that universities or provide the land. Research estimates that 120 billion Lebanese pounds (LBP) is the complementary financing of those universities (Nahas, 2009). Only 1.8% of the GDP comes from the direct public expenditure on education and this percentage includes general, vocational, and higher education (Tempus, 2012). It is very low compared to the Arab countries where their GDP for education was 6.4% in 2003 (World Bank, 2008). In Lebanon, the majority of HEI expenditure goes to wages of the staff. Lebanese families value education and this is obvious since household spending on education exceeds 10% of their total expenditure.

## 3.7 Governance and rankings

The governance system differs from one institution to another in Lebanon with each HEI having its own style. The public university in Lebanon is governed by the Council of the University that represents the president and the faculties’ deans. Usually, deans would be assigned by the Council of Ministers who are elected by faculty members. The governance is slightly different in American model adopting universities, where they have board of trustees that nominates the president and the deans. In cases where universities have private owners then those owners would be also members of the board of trustees. QS ranking studies the general performance of the institutions, faculty-student ratio and the number of academic staff holding PhDs among many other criteria. They also take into consideration the number of research papers published per faculty members and the number of citations per research paper. Based on these QS world university rankings, AUB ranks the second in the Middle East and Arab region and 244 globally (QS, 2020). AUB is the only Lebanese university that ranks in the top 10 in the Arab region. Other universities also in the rankings of the Arab region are the University of Balamand (501 globally and 36 in Arab region), Beirut Arab University (840 globally and 48 in Arab region), Lebanese University (1001 globally and 49 Arab region), Lebanese American University (551 globally and 15 in Arab region) and Saint-Joseph University (543 globally and 18 in Arab region). In terms of the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, AUB falls within the range of 501-600 rank, and they have only considered AUB from all Lebanese universities to include it in their ranking system. Based on the scientific research field, American University of Beirut has been ranked fifth (Times Higher Education, 2016).

## 3.8 Recognition and equivalence

There should be minimal respected standards for HEIs to obtain a license. Licensing is regulated by the private Higher Education Act which was passed on 1961 and under decree 9274 passed in 1996 (MEHE, 2017). There are many specifications that should be met according to the standards, such as the scientific equipment, laboratories, libraries, and buildings in addition to the professionalism of the academic staff. To obtain the license, there should be one full time professor for every 30 students, at least 50% should have a PhD or higher degree within their specialisation and the majority (almost 90%) should be Lebanese. To apply for a license, the following procedure must be completed:

1. The Legal entity should present an application for licensing;
2. The licensing file should be verified by the Directorate General who will notify the entity of any missing documents;
3. After verification, the Director General sends the file to the technical committee and requests a report on it within a month; and
4. The Council of Higher Education reviews the report of the technical committee and decides whether to license, request modification or refuse the application;
5. After passing from the Council of Higher Education, the Minister should submit the file to the Council of Ministers for final approval.

Lebanon established an equivalence committee in 1955 to manage the recognition and equivalence of degrees issued from the universities. The members of this committee are the presidents of the following universities: the American University of Beirut, the Lebanese University, the Beirut Arab University, the “Université Saint Esprit Kaslik”, the “Université Saint Joseph” and the “Académie Libanaise des Beaux Arts”. The committee also includes an administrative judge. This committee mainly has two roles: first to recognise the degrees of private institutions or universities in Lebanon and to give equivalence to higher education degrees from abroad. They have complete independence for their decisions. Lebanese University diplomas are considered the reference for equivalence of diplomas. On a yearly basis, the equivalence committee processes around 6,000 to 8,000 requests of which 65% are Lebanese degrees and 50% of the requests correspond to the degree of Business Administration. There are also other committees that work on different domains such as exams and practices. The Colloquium Examination Committee organises the colloquium exams for health and medical degree students twice per year. Students holding medical science degrees must pass this exam in order to be registered. A similar committee exists for engineering which was established in 1955 and known as the Engineering Practicing Committee and that advises the Ministry Work about authorisation to practice engineering.

## 3.9 Quality Assurance

The first Arab conference on quality assurance in higher education was held in Egypt in 2000. During that time, MEHE argued there was a need to improve the quality of Lebanese HEIs and establish a national entity for accreditation and evaluation. The Education Committee met in 2001 to replace the law enacted in the year 1996 with a new law on higher education. After several discussions, a draft law was issued in 2003 where they agreed to have an independent unit to monitor, evaluate and ensure the quality in higher education institutions (The National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance - NAHEQA). The Council of Ministers approved the law in 2010 (a gap of almost 7 years was due to political instability) and forwarded it to the House of Representatives for final approval which was granted in 2014 (again, a gap of almost 4 years due to political instability).

The law states that:

*All higher education institutions, public and private, with all their branches, operating on Lebanese territory, officially licensed, are subject to the provision of the quality assurance standards adopted by the agency. In case an institution or one of its branches or one of its programs failed to undergo the external evaluation, this shall be considered as a violation to the provisions of the applicable laws of higher education, and the minister shall be informed to take the appropriate steps and measures, within the framework of laws and regulations in force (Law no. 285/2014.)*

The main limitation of the law is that it does not contain any disciplinary actions or penalties for institutions in case of non-compliance and this affects willingness of universities to implement quality assurance. During the same year of the draft law; the Council of Ministers launched the requirement to audit the licensed universities to verify and to control the extent of which standards are implemented and to check the quality of the implementation. To carry out this role, they contacted specialised international bodies such as the TUV-Hellas, SGS and APAVE. The first audit of the Directorate General of Higher Education (DGHE) was undertaken in 2004 in private universities, a year after the draft law was passed. After the assessment, they published a list of blacklisted institutions that were not licensed, notifying them that the degrees generated are not recognized. The DGHE decided to conduct a second round of audit in the years 2011 and 2013 to evaluate the new campuses and the legal status of each institution by checking the materials present, academic and administrative aspects. After the assessment, the committee generated the list of all private higher institutions with their legal status (Khoury, 2013) and in 2014, the new law on higher education was ratified by the government.

The DGHE did not only work on national level but also sought international help from the World Bank and the European Union to implement quality assurance. There was full coordination between the three partners with the aim of improving the state of HEI in Lebanon. There is also a group of local experts known as the Higher Education Reform Experts (HERE) to support the modernisation of higher education system with full cooperation of the EU. Universities in Lebanon are also eager to increase their own quality of education, and thus have established quality assurance units with clear guidelines. For this reason, some of them were able to get international accreditations such as the American University of Beirut and the Lebanese American University which secured accreditation from NEASC, the “Université Saint Esprit Kaslik” was evaluated by IEP and many other universities are evaluated by different international entities. Having an accreditation means that the quality and the content of the programme the university is delivering meet the standards of that profession (Jammal, 2015). This gives accountability to the students, their parents and the whole community and the promise of continuous peer review and improvement. Accreditation agencies look at many factors within their review such as the curriculum, administrative structure, resources available and whether students have equal access to advising support, programme resources and supervision (Casile and Davis-Blake, 2002).

## 3.10 Conclusion

Lebanon has faced many political challenges, in addition to regional and international competition, that challenges the Lebanese HE system and threatens its reputation. There should have been significant efforts to establish solid structures with regards to curriculum content, research activities and admission standards, in addition to strict regulatory measures with regards to quality assurance and its implementation. This chapter helps in understanding the context of HE in Lebanon and the challenges it faces, which raises the importance of examining institutionalism and institutional theory and its application in higher education institutes globally and in Lebanon in particular. The upcoming chapter will introduce and discuss the adequate framework that needs to be adopted in order for the internationalisation of institutions to succeed.

# Chapter 4: Theoretical and Empirical review



## 4.1 Introduction

After introducing the context of HE in Lebanon in the previous chapter, empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks, used in the literature to analyse operations within HEIs globally, will be presented in this chapter, which will facilitate the application of these frameworks to the Lebanese context. The first section of this chapter will introduce the concepts of institutions and organisations and the HEI. The origins, development and application of institutional theory to analyse processes within institutions will then be introduced, in addition to research on the application of institutional analysis in the HE setting. Institutional theories have been widely used in education research and have been known to significantly impact international behaviours of institutions by facilitating or restricting internationalisation processes (Cai and Mahari, 2015; Korsakienė et al., 2015). The next section of this chapter will introduce the internationalisation process in higher education where developments at institutional level are integral. Moreover, the diffusion of innovation theory will also be introduced as another suitable framework for the analysis and development of best practices around internationalisation in HEIs. Innovation theory proposes that various external and internal factors define how the internationalisation process will be effectively implemented in an institution. This theory views organisational and leadership characteristics, in addition to stakeholders’ perceptions of the innovation being introduced, as key components in influencing the internationalisation process and this will be discussed in the last section of this chapter. Finally, following the literature reviewed in this chapter, the main research question and sub questions of the study will be presented, in addition to the proposed research model.

## 4.2 Institutions and organisations

Before discussing operations taking place within HEIs, it is important to define the concepts of institutions and organisations. Institutions help to create a better sense of the world; they are known to be systems of prevalent social rules and establishments that arrange social interactions (Hodgson, 2006). Everything around us are part of institutions such as marriage, table etiquettes, metric measures and firms. According to Huntington (1968), institutions are stable valued, recurring patterns of behaviour. These institutions are considered rationalised myths (Meyer and Rowan, 1977) or social understandings (Greenwood et al., 2008) that serve to impose order. Every facet of society, including people, organisations, and communities are the general actors of institutions that state the rules of the game (North, 1995). The rules draw the line between what is acceptable to a given society and what is not. It is also indicative of the agreement between individuals and the norms within a society. That is, institutions are developed and function in a pattern of social self-organisation, which are generally beyond the conscious intentions of the individuals involved (Leftwich, 2006). Institutions are often set and fixed, yet radical changes can sometimes occur. However, changes are often slow, through the politics of modification and reforms (Leftwich, 2006). Usually, rules set through institutions are transmitted within a society by various carriers such as routines, symbols, and artefacts (Scott, 2001), and people benefit from transmitting them consistently to various generations because it offers stability and all of those become part of their habits (Hodgson, 2006). Thus, institutions and people living in society are dependent on each other in a mutually beneficial situation of interdependence and interaction among the two (Zenger et al., 2002; Hodgson, 2006).

Institutions can have different degrees of sensitivity and insensitivity. A sensitive situation is exposed when the rules of the game can be considerably altered based on the preferences or dispositions of the concerned agents. Consequently, breaking the rules depends on the disposition and preference of each agent within a society. On the contrary, if there is an incentive to conform to the rules then the institution is agent insensitive, because in that case actors use incentives to conform to the reigning rules although they might not be their favoured positions or opinions. These rules are shared explicitly and implicitly (Hodgson, 2006). In some cases, they are well organised and could be easily recognised if breached, while in other cases they are ratified out of a collective implicit agreement, which makes deviance possible in their implementation. Some institutional rules require other entities for their enforcement (Hodgson, 2006; Cai and Mehari, 2015) such the police to enforce the law. In other institutions, the implementation is based on moral legitimacy. However, in all situations, presence of incentives and disincentives is essential. For example, when there is a perception that rules are not implemented, enforcement is necessary and this is the case, for example, in tax evasion.

For laws to become rules, they must be imposed on society and reach to a point where avoidance is no longer acceptable. Both laws and rules can change and evolve over time due to technological and social developments that facilitate the flow of work (Searle, 2005). In addition, organisations are also considered institutions as they have rules within their governing system (Hodgson, 2006). The only difference between an organisation and an institution is that organisations have specific boundaries and principles of governance, which indicate who oversees the responsibilities within an organisation. Therefore, the HE system is considered to be an institution (North, 1990), and this will be further discussed in section 4.3 below. However, the literature has indicated that institutional theory can be used to analyse operations and changes within the higher education setting.

## 4.3 Institutional theory and institutional analysis

Institutional theory can be traced back to 1957 and it was first developed to challenge classic organisation theory. Organisation theory explains the adoption of an action because of a rational decision to control the work of activities, and increase efficiency and coordination (Taylor, 1911; Weber, 1946). Selznick (cited in Cai and Mehari, 2015) argued that the operations of organisations are often in response to internal issues of influence and competing values, norms, and attitudes where conflicts of interest and vested interests are central. In addition, he also proposed that the primary unit of analysis is the individual organisation. Thus, Selznick allocated the term “institution” to organisations that are “social organisms” affected by their internal context and this is now known as old institutionalism (Cai and Mehari, 2015). Twenty-five years later, 1977 marked the beginning of new institutionalist thinking with the emergence of a publication by Meyer and Rowen. This work shifted the focus onto the issues of legitimacy and the effect of the external context, conforming to isomorphic pressures in their environment (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). This institutional theory proposed views the organisation as an “open system” that responds to any external and internal forces for the sake of legitimacy and increased efficiency (Scott, 1981). Meyer and Rowan proposed that organisations are driven to gain the legitimacy of external constituents such as the society and government by submitting to external rules, norms and ideologies that are accepted in wider society, which are referred to as “rationalised myths” (Meyer and Rowan, 1977, p. 343).

The literature has also highlighted the role of shared meanings and institutional conformity leading the organisational field into a state of isomorphism (Tolbert and Zucker, 1983). Baum and Oliver (1991) highlight the importance of conforming to these rationalised myths to minimise the risk of organisational death and to prolong its survival (Mohamad, 2017). As such, organisations must have strong ties to the external context, and this is done through the structure, design and rules of the organisation. However, the implementation of these rationalised myths can sometimes interfere or conflict with the requirements of production and efficiency. For instance, hiring experts to enhance the institution’s prestige and reputation will not be justified nor will it improve productivity (Meyer et al., 1983). Therefore, this often leads to a dilemma within the organisation because of the need to maintain efficiency and preserve their conformity image at the same time (Boxenbaum and Josson, 2008). As a compromise, organisations often employ the decoupling process, in which the organisation maintains a conformity façade while practically its daily operations differ from its real rules (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Boxenbaum and Jonsson, 2008).

Furthermore, the institutionalisation literature focuses on codes of ethics. Murphy (1988) and Brenner (1992) emphasised that institutionalisation is not merely the drafting of code of ethics, but rather involves support from top management, ethical leadership, and a change in culture (Mohamad, 2017). Moreover, Broom and Selznick (cited in Mohamad, 2017) defined institutionalisation as the “emergence of orderly, stable, and socially integrated patterns in loosely formed organisations.” Further, Selznick elaborated in 1957 that the institutionalisation process is not only about technical requirements while performing a certain task, but rather the infusion of values and considered institutionalisation as a process that happens over time (Mohamad, 2017). Burke et al. defined institutionalisation as a set of developing standards, codes, and principles suitable to help customers and clients in transparency (cited in Mohamad, 2017). Moreover, depending on their environments, organisations often make changes to their formal structures for survival purposes (Mohamad, 2017). Consequently, organisations making these changes will have similar characteristics that allow them to be successfully accepted in their social environment.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) proposed an explanation for how this change (adoption of formal structure or characteristics) is implemented within an organisation through three interdependent forces which ultimately lead towards isomorphism: normative, coercive, and mimetic. Mimetic isomorphism, which is due to environmental uncertainties within the organisation and the pressure exerted by competition, is the process by which new or poorly performing organisations follow in the steps of more successful and leading institutions (Beckert, 2010). This process helps the organisation, by saving time and the costs incurred searching for their own solutions, to address various shortfalls and problems such as changes in technology, student needs and demands, income deficiency and faculty shortage (Braunscheidel et al., 2011). This method is known as benchmarking. Coercive isomorphism is when organisations are submitted to external pressures, be it informal or formal, by another organisation that has control over their resources and by cultural expectations of the society (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). A well-known example of this concept is the organisational changes introduced into certain institutions because of attempting to conform to the laws, norms and demands concerning issues such as production patterns, organisational behaviour and relationships with consumers (Freitas and Guimarães, 2007). Normative isomorphism is linked to professionalisation (Lipincka and Verhoeven, 2014). When educational and professional networks are implemented, it can increase the legitimacy of the organisation. For this reason, implementing normative pressure is considered to be a moral duty (Boxenbaum and Jonsson, 2008). In Lebanon, most of the universities are in educational agreement and partnership wih foreign universities which requires them to follow their practices. Noting also that Lebanon was a former French colony, HEIs have adopted many practices from French educational system.

Although the 3 types of isomorphism stem from different conditions and can influence organisational changes in different ways, it is worth mentioning that some researchers have proposed that they can overlap and intermingele (Frumkin and GalasKiewicz, 2004). Some of the characterstics that distinguish between these 3 types of pressures are that coercive pressures are often linked to the external environment outside the organisational field, while mimetic and normative pressures usually originate from within the organisational field (Frumkin and GalasKiewicz, 2004, p.285). These isomorphic pressures work together to homogenise the educational field (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) with different levels of impact (Scott, 2001).

This brief review of the literature has demonstrated that the institutional theory holds tremendous potential for understanding changes occurring in the world (Greenwood and Hining, 1996). As such, institutional analysis of the organisational field is required to understand the changes occurring within the system of an organisation. As HEIs, such as universities and colleges, are considered institutions, the use of institutional analysis to understand the change process within higher education is important. The following section clarifies the notion of higher education as an institution and provides a review of research on the application of institutional analysis within the HE context.

## 4.4 Institutionalism within Higher Education

Meyer et al. (2007) argue that considering higher education as an institution can help explain many of its characteristics and effects on modern society. They further argue that HE systems are seen as “something of an enactment of structures whose nature and meaning have been institutionalised over many centuries and now apply throughout the world” (Meyer et al., 2007, p. 187). One of the most important implications of institutionalisation is showing unexpected similarities between institutions despite their existence in various diverse settings and social, cultural, and economic conditions. And indeed, HE systems across the world have become remarkably similar, in terms of evolution, curricular content, faculty composition, pattern of enrolment, aspirations and much more (Meyer et al., 2007). Even at the organisational level, homogeneity has been observed in HEIs (Meyer et al., 2007). Yet this homogeneity is often more visible across a nation rather than at a global level as HEIs adopt organisational concepts and models afforded, and legitimated, by its surrounding environments (Meyer et al., 2007; Baltaru and Soysal, 2018).

In institutional theory, higher education is considered an institution since it includes rules that facilitates the interaction between its communities. The whole process of deliberating degrees and the tenure system are rules that structure the university both internally and externally to its stakeholders. A higher education system classifies people based on their level of knowledge and creates professionals with a specific knowledge and skills such as physicians, accountants, doctors and economists. Education clearly plays a role in definitions of citizenship and nationhood along with what obligations and rights are involved within these definitions (Bendix, 1964; Findlow, 2016). It is also known to grant authority and power to the elite group and allocation to specific positions and outcomes of occupational progression (Blau and Duncan, 1967). This means that positions are assigned based on the education of the person. It also offers the dissemination of new ideas, frameworks, and creative thinking within the society (Barnett, 2004). As argued by Bell (1973), HEIs, such as colleges and universities that used to signify the society’s status system, have become the “gatekeepers” of class positions. As such, access to these institutions have become a determinant of the future stratification of these societies.

In addition, Meyer and Rowan (1977) proposed that organisations, such as those in HE, are compelled to abide by certain rules outside the organisation for the purpose of seeking legitimacy. A similar view is proposed in institutional theory, namely that the organisation functions as an “open system” that incorporates the practices and procedures set by rationalised concepts of organisational work and institutionalised in society in order to gain legitimacy and access to other resources necessary for survival (Scott, 1981, p.22). As an example, “management techniques implemented, such as quality improvement programmes, may help higher education institutions to manage the impression that outsiders have about them, even if they exist more on paper than in practice” (Csizmadia, 2006). From the early 19th century educational institutions became constrained by legitimacy, which is maintained if the university maintains the confidence and trust of the public though conforming to institutionalised values, norms and technical knowledge (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). Organisations do so to reflect a state of conformance in the eye of external constituencies such as the government and society (Meyer and Rowan, 1977).

Research argues that HEIs are shifting to more tightly coupled and narrowly controlled practices as a result of environmental changes (Meyer and Rowan, 2006). For instance, the concept of internationalisation of HEIs reflects years of changes in the approaches to the international dimension of higher education (OECD, 2019). Internationalisation is not only the process of incorporating international and global dimensions to education, but has also homogenised higher education and has affected the entire higher education sector by introducing insitutional changes to the ethos and values of education (OECD, 2019). Three main changes have altered the insitutional reality of education. Firstly, due to the advancement of knowledge and the dependency of the economy on the education sector, HEIs are playing a major role in determining the advancement of society. Secondly, demands for accountability and a heightened concern with educational productivity (Meyer and Rowan, 2006has led to more controlled practices in the HEI. As such, society, parents, employers, and non-governmental organisations have been included more in the governance of education to provide higher accountability and concerns with higher productivity (Meyer and Rowan, 2006). Thirdly, intense competition, international trade and rapid technological advancement are the main factors of globalisation which has resulted in the internationalisation of higher education and its growth (Marginson and Van der Wende, 2007). Due to globalisation, current educational institutions have adopted similar teaching methods, management and administrative practices and similar curricula (Meyer et al., 2005). As such, this change, which has truly and fundamentally altered the instiutional reality of education, has become of great significance to researchers in the field of education as it has gained popularity and became a growing trend in universities and colleges across the globe.

## 4.5 Internationalisation in higher education institutions

Internationalisation has gained recognition and popularity in the educational sector since the early 1980s (Knight, 2015). This growing popularity in the educational sector coincides with the global decline in public funding for universities that have prompted many institutions to seek and compete for private funds and student tuition fees (Vavrus et al., 2015). In 2015, the following widely used definition of internationalisation at the national sector and institutional levels was proposed by Knight (2015, p.2) “as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education”. According to available research, internationalisation is not only about the curriculum needs of students or student mobility, rather it is a multidimensional strategic policy that involves and affects both national and international dimensions of HE (Khorsandi, 2014). It is proposed that internationalisation comprises six major components: (1) international student recruitment; (2) student and scholar mobility; (3) research and knowledge exchange and technical assistance; (4) marketing and expansion of university campuses and branches abroad; (5) internationalisation of campus curricula; and (6) virtual transnational internationalisation (Khorsandi, 2014).

### 4.5.1 Rationale and strategies

Studies assessing the reasons behind internationalisation in HE have found that rationales vary between institutions. The common key rationales include: the preparation of students to live and work in a globalised world; the improvement of academic quality; the strengthening of research; attracting new students; generating revenues; and securing prestige and reputation (Khorsandi, 2014). Moreover, according to Knight (2004) the rationales of internationalisation in higher education can be divided into four sectors: socio-cultural, political, economic growth and academic as shown in Figure 4.1 below. Furthermore, internationalisation aids the commodification and commercialisation of higher education (de Wit, 2011). Moreover, strategies of internationalisation in universities have also been a research topic in the literature, whereby strategies also vary between different contexts and institutions (de Wit, 2011). Maringe (2013) listed the following as commonly used strategies to internationalise universities: (1) international student recruitment; (2) exchange programmes for staff and students; (3) teaching collaboration and partnerships including joint programmes and offshore teaching; (4) international collaborative research partnerships; and (5) curriculum internationalisation, which may range from minor changes in content to in depth fundamental recreation of objectives, teaching methods and assessment with global aspects.

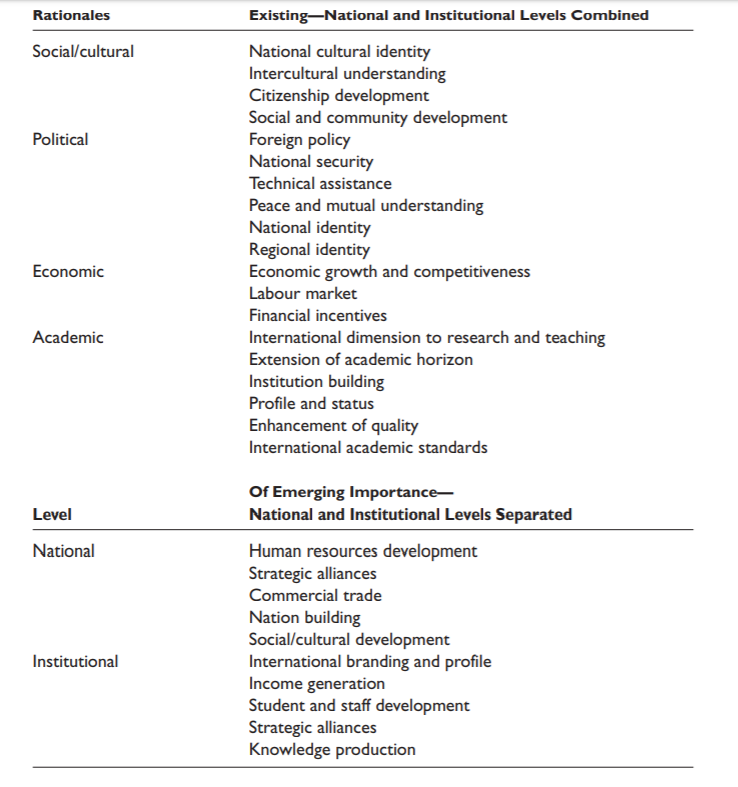


Figure 4.1: Rationales driving internationalisation of higher education (Knight, 2004)

According to Knight, an institution’s approach or strategy for implementing internationalisation is dependent on its mission, priorities, culture, politics, and resources, and this approach could change during the implementation process. Based on the available literature, six approaches have been proposed (Cornelius, 2012): *the activity approach* which targets specific engagements including study abroad, international student recruitment, international collaboration among institutions; *the outcomes approach* which targets the desired results of internationalisation including increasing the international competencies of students, the international profile of the institution, and international agreements and partnerships among institutions; *the rationales approach* which takes into account the motivation behind internationalisation including the improvement of academic standards, revenue generation, increasing diversity, and student or staff development; *the ethos approach*, which focuses on creating a campus environment that endorses and encourages international and intercultural understanding; *the abroad/cross border approach*, which involves education delivery to other countries; and *the process approach,* which entails the incorporation of internationalisation in the three primary institutional functions of teaching and learning, research, and service.

The process approach has been recognised in the literature as the most comprehensive strategy to internationalisation as it involves a wide range of international engagements. These engagements have been divided into two categories: organisational strategies and programme strategies (Cornelius, 2012). Organisational strategies involve activities aiming to incorporate internationalisation in HEIs, which include primary aspects of governance, mainly strategic planning, administrative structure, and student and faculty services. These strategies are essential to establish institutional commitment and ensure the sustainability of internationalisation programmes (Cornelius, 2012). Programme strategies involve academic activities and services conducted within an internationalisation framework, which include curriculum and faculty engagement, research, student recruitment, and transnational engagements (Cornelius, 2012).

### 4.5.2 Elements of internationalisation

A review of the literature indicates various elements that play an important role in the internationalisation process, such as facilitators, activities, challenges, mechanisms, factors and strategies (Knight, 1994, Munusamy and Hashim, 2020). Often, these elements represent different types of academic activities and can vary at the national and institutional level (Knight 1994, 1997 and 1999). Knight (1994) differentiated between academic and organisational elements and emphasised the importance of a permanent organisational commitment and structure that keeps the academic activities of the internationalisation process alive. Knight identified the most important elements of internationalisation, presented in Figure 4.2 (below). At the institutional level, operational strategies are used for international integration of research, teaching, and services for international students and policies for administration (Zolfaghari et al., 2009). Essentially, internationalisation strategies are mainly dedicated to inter-institutional agreements, networking in terms of research and teaching, recruitment of international students and establishment of branch campuses and other international activities (Harman, 2005; Knight, 2008a; Shahijan et al., 2016).

Table

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Figure 4.2: Important elements of internationalisation

The strategy elements should be linked with internationalisation theory at theoretical and operational levels. Melin (1992) claimed that the internationalisation process at both conceptual and practical levels is complex, diverse, and unstable.

## 4.6 Diffusion of innovation and internationalisation

With the broadening concept of internationalisation, it is no longer focused on the activities of individuals and their individual development; rather internationalisation is now recognised as a process that impacts higher education at the institutional and system levels (Van der Wende et al., 1999). In the application of internationalisation, major changes could be observed in objectives, structures, delivery sites and modes for curricular development; teaching and learning processes, the language of instruction, students and staff, communication patterns; qualification structures and procedures for grading, credit allocation, recognition and quality assurance; research programmes and practices; positions and roles, organisational structures and units; and decision-making procedures (Van der Wende et al., 1999). Internationalisation is viewed as a systematic change in HE, that is broad and has deep impacts on departments, schools and activities, institutional culture, values, policies, and practices (Qiu, 2018). Considering all these potential changes, internationalisation will lead to various types of innovations in universities and other HEIs (Van der Wende et al., 1999). From this perspective, internationalisation is considered an innovation that offers new educational practices (Qiu, 2018). As such, innovation theories are suitable frameworks for the analysis and development of best practices around internationalisation in higher education institutions.

Rogers’ 1995 book on *Diffusion of Innovation* introduced one of the most popular theories on the process of adopting new innovations (Sherry and Gibson, 2002). This framework, also referred to as “the theory of attributes”, has been applied in various disciplines, including the educational sector and takes a sociological approach to how innovations are perceived, accepted, and diffused. Rogers (1995, p.5) defines diffusion as “the process in which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system.” Diffusion is a special communication process that aims to share information in a manner that reduces the individuals’ uncertainty about the benefits and limits of the innovation (Qiu, 2018). The objective of the process is to communicate information in a way that increases the rate of adoption of an innovation (Qiu, 2018). When an innovation is compatible with the institutional context, the innovation can spread throughout the organisation, which is referred to as diffusion and indicates acceptance of the innovation by the individuals involved (Van der Wende et al., 1999). Diffusion will only occur if individuals in the organisation (every employee and manager involved in the internationalisation process) see the innovation as gainful, in terms of cost-effectiveness, enabling cross-border cooperation with important stakeholders, more efficient exploration of resources, all of which can increase the profitability of the organisation (Van der Wende et al., 1999). Moreover, adoption is defined as the phase where the decision maker recognises the innovation as the best available option and takes a decision to fully utilise it. It is note-worthy mentioning that the innovation is this context does not have to be “new” but rather the innovation might only be “new” to the organisation and the individuals involved (Rogers, 1995).

According to Rogers (1995), the process of diffusion, and subsequently adoption, occurs within four frames: (1) the characteristics of the innovation; (2) the existing communication channels which will be used to inform people about the innovation; (3) the time of introduction of the innovation and when the people become informed of the innovation; and (4) the social system that creates the context – the place – where the innovation is introduced. The “rate of adoption” is the time which the process takes to complete. The rate of diffusion and potential adoption of an innovation is affected by the perceptions of five attributes. Rogers stated (1995, p.212):

*It is the receivers' perceptions of the attributes of innovations, not the attributes as classified by experts or change agents, that affect their rate of adoption. Like beauty, innovations exist only in the eye of the beholder. And it is the beholder's perceptions that influence the beholder`s behaviour.*

Rogers (1995) and Simard and Rice (2007) mentioned five attributes of innovation that directly affect the rate of adoption. *Relative advantage* refers to the degree to which an innovation offers an added value, either financially or non-financially and that could grant its adopters an added advantage on a personal, professional, or institutional level. *Compatibility* refers to the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being consistent with the potential adopters’ existing values, work habits, past experiences, and perceived goals. *Complexity* refers to the degree to which an innovation is perceived as relatively difficult to understand and to use. *Observability* refers to the degree to which the results of an innovation are visible to others. *Trialability* refers to the degree to which an innovation may be experimented on a limited basis or the degree to which the innovation can be easily divided for experimentation*.* In general, innovations that are perceived by adopters as having greater relative advantage, compatibility, trialability, observability, and less complexity, are likely to be adopted more rapidly than other innovations. The implementation of a certain innovation can only be successful if the employees’ levels of commitment and competency to the use of this innovation are achieved (Klein and Sorra, 1996).

Despite the popularity of internationalisation in the educational sector, there is little theoretical research that links the issues of internationalisation, higher education, and diffusion (Qiu, 2018). Researchers who studied the innovation and adoption process in academic institutions found that diffusion occurs over a period of time, starting at a low pace and then accelerating and reaching a peak before a final decline (Qiu, 2018). The following factors that influence the pace of adoption and diffusion include attributes of the innovation, adopter’s traits and organisational and economic variables (Qiu, 2018). Organisational characteristics of universities that play a significant role in the internationalisation process have been a key research topic in the literature and will be discussed at length in the next section.

## 4.7 Organisational characteristics of the universities and internationalisation

Organisational culture, that is the organisational characteristics of universities, has been recognised as a key component in organisational change (Tichy, 1982). Universities and other HEIs are complex organisations with a distinct set of characteristics, which have a great influence on the culture of these institutions (Tichy, 1982; Sporn, 1996). Being a highly labour-intensive organisation with a large diverse group of professionals and staff makes the accomplishment of goals and objectives more complicated due to the need to develop and utilise a range of standards in relation to the variety of outcomes, and outputs produced, many of which cannot be measured very well (Bartell, 2003). A conflict in values and beliefs may exist among professors and administrators in the university (Bartell, 2003). Professors tend to highly value autonomy and academic freedom, while administrators often focus on the maintenance of administrative system and procedural requirements. As such, this inherent conflict can inhibit and slow down the process of change and innovation.

However, the concept of a “loosely coupled system” could offer an adaptational perspective on this conflict by suggesting that administrators could play an important and balancing role in the change process in promoting "experimentation", "collective judgement" and "dissent" by means of "enhanced leadership", "focused attention", or "shared values" rather than being at loggerheads (Weick, 1976; Orton and Weick, 1990, Bartell, 2003). Furthermore, the operations and the environment of the universities are complex, demanding and rapidly evolving (Bartell, 2003). Bartell (2003, p.53) states that “the complexity, high degree of differentiation, multiplicity of units and standards, autonomy of professors, control and management philosophies and mechanisms, which increasingly do not operate effectively even in business organisations, are likely to be complicating and inhibiting factors vis-a-vis pressures for institutional change, particularly for internationalisation of the university as an identified strategic high priority.”

Considering these conditions, the culture of the university gains greater standing in shaping the university’s environment, and thus understanding the culture of the university is necessary in any analysis of managing structure and processes (Dill ,1982; Masland, 1985). It is also important factor to consider in the implementation of internationalisation as an integrated approach at a level broader than the single, specialised unit or sub-unit (Bartell, 2003). Sporn (1996) identified four types of university culture as presented in Figure 4.3 (known as a typology of university culture). Each cell of the typology represents a different type of university culture which are as follows: (cell 1) weak and internally oriented cultures; (cell 2) weak and externally oriented cultures; (cell 3) strong and internally oriented cultures; and (cell 4) strong and externally oriented cultures. The culture typology provides a variety of approaches to help identify and understand the internationalisation of universities in relation to the internal culture, the external environment, the functioning structure, and the related strategies (Bartell, 2003). Applications of this typology indicate that the university that has an outward perspective, encourages, and rewards creative innovation, and builds on the “power of the cultures in which planning occurs”, can be quite successful in the internationalisation process. Conversely, the university that functions hierarchically and is mainly occupied with internal maintenance, resource allocation and control, often is not successful in the internationalisation process (Bartell, 2003).

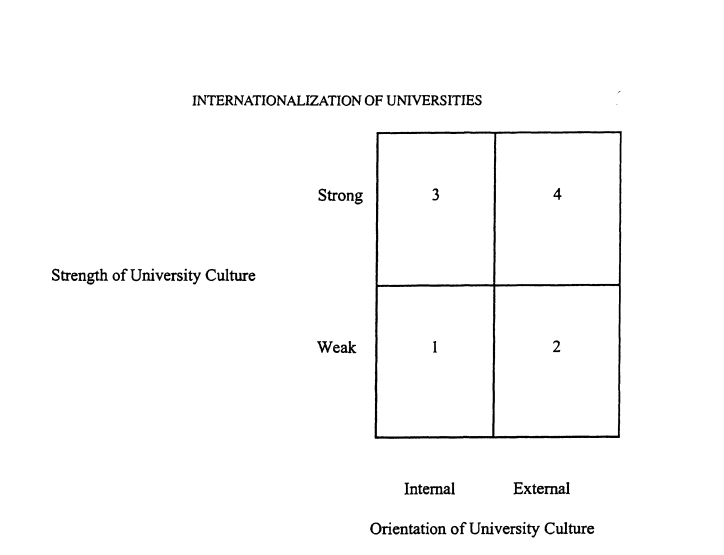


Figure 4.3: Typology of university culture (Sporn 1996, p.56)

### **4**.7.1 Leadership characteristics and change agents

As discussed above, the implementation of internationalisation in HEIs requires organisational change (Papadimitriou, 2011) and it should not be forgotten that it is a difficult task (Meister-Scheytt and Scheytt, 2005; Shattock, 2005). The university is one of the most complex organisations, having an adaptive system of operation due to the large number of agents, each behaving according to their own principles (Stacey, 2000). Every faculty and every programme operate in a different way and each department has its own (degree of) authority over the pedagogical and curricular decisions within the system. This means it is not individual agents or a group of agents that determine the change within an organisation, but rather the effective leadership of the institution (Buchanan and Badham, 1999; Carnall, 2003). It is worth mentioning that decision makers in leadership positions in HEIs, such as the Dean, Head of School or Department and committee members are sometimes appointed for a temporary period, for one term or on a rotating basis (Middlehurst, 1993). Therefore, leadership authority in a HEI is not always based upon an individual’s performance, but rather it is diffused as a result of the dispersion of academic governance across the institution (Lyons, 2008).

In the early stages of research into leadership, it was defined as “the reciprocal process of mobilising, by persons with certain motives and values, various economic, political, and other resources, in context of competition and conflict, in order to realise goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers” (Burns, 1978, p. 425). It was later argued that leadership includes processing change and that to have a successful change then the organisation needs to create its own vision, communicate policy, and deploy strategy (Davies et al., 2001). Leadership plays a crucial role in the change management process in the higher education sector (McRoy and Gibbs, 2003). The change environment includes (depending on the specific HE system) provosts, presidents, vice-chancellors and even the board of trustees (Dew, 2009). The internal agents are those who proactively create the innovation within the system (DiMaggio, 1988; Howell and Higgins, 1990). Implementation of internationalisation within this sector suggests that internal agents are the major drivers for such a change (Csizmadia, 2006; Papadimitriou, 2011; Kahsay, 2012; Cooper et al., 2014). Effective leadership requires an ability to communicate the vision of the institution, distribute the roles that would pave the way to a successful implementation and to possess the managerial skills to overcome any challenges coming internally or externally from the system. Those who can legitimise the implementation and support it fully are the ones who are called leaders since they have full authority to distribute the resources.

Both institutional and innovation theory consider the process of internationalisation and its implementation as a process which requires changes within the organisational policies, values, practices and structures. Both theories consider that leaders are essential within the system to drive such a process. Innovation theory views the leaders as change agents and opinion leaders while institutional theory calls them institutional entrepreneurs. The individual who is capable of influencing a stakeholder’s innovation decision in the direction desirable by itself is known to be a change agent (Roger, 2003). In fact, change agents are those who speed up the process of innovation implementation through finding the communication channels that are effective in easing the diffusion of an innovation. These change agents may also slow down any diffusion that they think may have undesirable implications. However, for the change agents to attain desired results of adopting innovation, they need power which might be either managerial or financial. Change agents are the ones who take action when there is a need to change, and they are the ones that put forward alternatives to prevailing problems, exaggerate the importance of these alternatives and convince the clients that they are capable of confronting the problems that exist. The most important thing is that the clients should find the change agent someone trustworthy, credible and have empathy with the need and problems of the community. Credibility is established when the change agent is a trustworthy role model with experience in the context in which he/she is trying to introduce change (Miles et al., 1988).

Opinion leaders are different to change agents; they usually provide advice on the innovations in the system and provide information. They are the ones capable of influencing an individual’s behaviour or attitude in a desired way (Rogers, 1995). Opinion leaders can be either in formal positions held by high status individuals or this can be informal. Usually, this position is acquired by individuals who have the accessibility, technical and social skills and who willingly conform to the system’s norms (Rogers, 1995). Institutional theory solely relies on the human agent for institutional change (Greenwood et al., 2008). For this reason, the institution needs entrepreneurs to implement these changes through mobilising the resources available, creating a vision for change and providing sufficient motivation within the system to sustain and achieve the vision (Battilana et al., 2009). These entrepreneurs will first initiate changes within the institutional environment and actively participate in the implementation of those changes (DiMaggio, 1988).

It is argued that no one leader can drive change alone, help is needed which comes from their colleagues co-leading the organisations (Weber, 2008). This makes leadership a team activity performed by several individuals. This means that leadership is required at all levels of the organisation where the leader would engage all the stakeholders and secure their commitment to improve the overall performance of an organisation (Simmons, 1997). To reach the desired level of change and implement the necessary activities leadership should be shared (Gregory, 1996) and it should target different levels within an organisation to have a holistic approach of institutionalisation within an organisation (Middlehurst, 1995). This will be further explored during the data collection phase of this study.

### 4.7.2 Resistance to change

Kashner (1990, p.20) emphasised that by "readying an institution to reply to the conditions that call for change or to innovate on the institution's own initiative requires a clear understanding of its corporate culture and how to modify that culture in a desired direction." And failure to understand the culture of the organisation and the way the culture interacts with, and influences, the contemplated change strategies will lead to a failed implementation of change (Farmer, 1990). According to Val and Fuentes (2003), the reasons for resistance vary among the various stages of the change process. During the formulation stage, there are various reasons for resisting change including: (1) lack of the organisations’ ability to view the future with clarity; (2) denial or refusal to acknowledge and accept unexpected or undesired information; (3) the organisations’ tendency to always think in the same way despite changes in the situation; (4) implicit assumptions, which are often not talked about and which can distort or misrepresent reality; (5) communication barriers, which can also lead to misinterpretation of information; and (6) organisational silence, which is restricting the flow of information with individuals who do not express their thoughts, so decisions are made with incomplete information and without all the required data (Chandler, 2013).

Chandler (2013) also identifies many types of resistance that occur at the implementation stage including: (1) the climate of implementation and the relation between organisational and change values (for example: a strong implementation climate coupled with a negative values’ relation will lead to resistance and opposition to change); (2) politics of certain departments or resistance from departments that might suffer from the implemented change; (3) incommensurable beliefs, which is a clear and definitive disagreement among the groups involved regarding the problem and its effective solution; (4) deep rooted values and emotional loyalty; and (5) forgetfulness of the social dimension of changes. Moreover, internal resistance to change can also occur, and may be due to: leadership inaction, whereby leaders can sometimes be afraid of uncertainty, or changing the status quo; embedded routines; and collective action problems, specially dealing with the difficult tasks such as deciding who is going to make the first move or how to deal with free-riders. Internal resistance can also be a result of incapability to implement change and due to cynicism (Chandler, 2013).

## 4.8 Stakeholders’ perceptions of internationalisation

As discussed above, a key element of an effective change process are the perceptions and attitudes of concerned stakeholders in relation to the innovation being implemented. Within an HE setting, stakeholders could be numerous including government, employers, students, academic and administrative staff, institutional managers, prospective students and their parents, and taxpayers who believe that HEIs and polices are accountable to them and therefore behave accordingly (Jongbloed et al. 2008; Cho and Palmer, 2013). In 1963, the Stanford Research Institute defined the term stakeholder as “those groups without whose support the organisation would cease to exist” (Zsolnai 2006, 38). Stakeholder involvement in HE has significant implications that can help support the survival of the university (Jongbloed et al. 2008). In addition, stakeholders of universities are often the predominant actors who may benefit or lose the most from the universities’ operations and activities (Benneworth and Jongbloed 2010). As such, stakeholders are interested in “what is at stake” and “what counts” (Mitchell et al., 1997 p. 856).

Researchers argue that since decision-making processes in HEIs are influenced by a group of diverse stakeholders, their perception of internationalisation is significant. A successful implementation of internationalisation requires that the university establishes an institutional environment that promotes the engagement of stakeholders in the process of determining the criteria for the relevant performance of an individual or a group (Hersey et al., 2001). This engaging environment has various benefits including: (1) the group of diverse stakeholders are encouraged to participate in determining the indicators that will be used to evaluate the internationalisation process; and (2) stakeholders’ involvement helps strengthen their commitment to the goals of the internationalisation process (Cho and Palmer, 2013). Bennett (2010) defined engagement as the involvement of stakeholders in activities concerning student learning or organisational development and therefore stakeholder engagement has a significant role in guiding the internationalisation policies. Yarbrough et al. (2011) further introduce two terms that are important attributes of engagement, inclusiveness, and responsiveness. These refer, respectively, to the breadth of involvement of, and orientation to, stakeholders. Inclusiveness and responsiveness are important attributes of engagement.

In addition, tools that enable the alignment of strategies and behaviour of the various institutional and individual stakeholders to the vision and strategy that has been defined is important for the successful implementation of internationalisation (OECD, 2019). Therefore, incentivisation is required to make internationalisation a priority for all concerned stakeholders, be it institutions, academic, students, local governments and business sector (OECD, 2019). Mainardes et al. (2013) argue that in HE settings, the perception of stakeholders concerning the institutional values of a certain university is important so that their expectations and demands stay relevant to institutional goals and objectives. Previous studies have revealed that faculty and students are definitive stakeholders that have a significant influential role in the universities decision-making process (Chapleo and Simms, 2010; Mainardes et al., 2013; Moraru, 2012).

## 4.9 The proposed research model

In chapter 1 the concept of internationalisation in HE, along with its potential advantages and disadvantages was considered, presenting an overview of the topic at hand at both the global and local levels. In chapter 2 the dimensions of the internationalisation of HE were expanded upon, discussing its definition and rationale and considering the internationalisation of the curriculum. This sought to highlight both critiques of, and the potential dangers facing, internationalisation arising from the relevant literature. Internationalisation within the context of international trade was also discussed. Moreover, the past experiences in internationalisation in Lebanese HEIs were presented to identify all available research related to the country. This enabled the researcher to assess the relative lack of research and highlight how the proposed research is relevant to addressing the gaps in the literature. The context of HE in Lebanon was introduced in chapter 3, to set up a background that describes the local setting in which the research was to be conducted. Consequently, the history of HE in Lebanon, the types of HEIs, figures pertaining to staff and student recruitment in Lebanese institutions were considered. Chapter 4 focused mainly on theoretical and empirical reviews. As HE is considered an institution, the concept of institutions and organisations was introduced, in addition to the institutional theory that is used to analyse organisational change in an institution. Furthermore, the diffusion of innovation was also presented in chapter 4 as it is a notion that relates to organisational changes in an institution. The discussion of these two theories was essential to guide the design of the research since internationalisation requires changes at the organisational level. Moreover, the literature showed that organisational characteristics of the universities including leadership and resistance to change, in addition to stakeholders’ perceptions, can significantly affect the internationalisation process.

These factors, which were discussed in detail in chapter 4, facilitated the framing of our research questions and identify the factors that need to be targeted during the research fieldwork. Based on the literature review provided, there are various aspects that need to be considered to explore factors affecting the responsiveness to internationalisation in HEIs and these are:

1. Institutional and the diffusion of innovation theories are both powerful tools that have been extensively used to understand change processes within an institution and the application of these theories to understand the process of internationalisation in HE and define best practices is important to help Lebanese HEIs successfully implement internationalisation processes;
2. Organisational characteristics within universities and stakeholders’ perceptions of the change processes can vary widely and can greatly influence the level of responsiveness or resistance to the implementation of internationalisation within a university; and
3. Studying the factors that influence the internationalisation process is important to identify best practice and minimise organisational conflicts that limit progress and the successful implementation of change.

Therefore, utilising the frameworks of institutional and diffusion of innovation theories, the proposed research model (Figure 4.4 below) proposes that organisational characteristics and stakeholders’ perceptions will influence the responsiveness of Lebanese private universities to internationalisation.

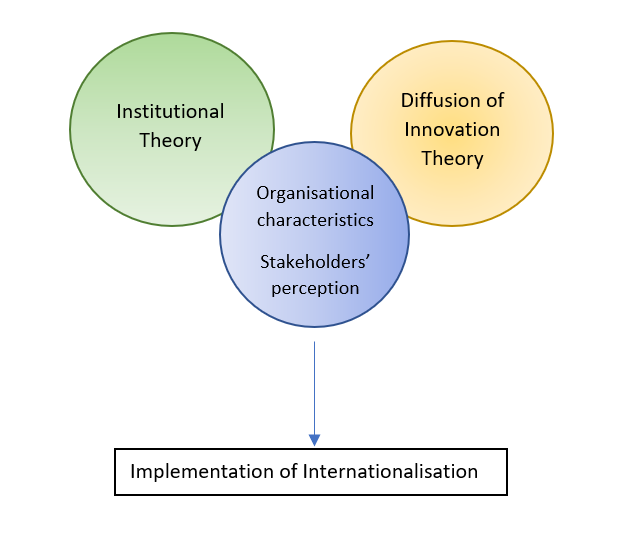


Figure 4.4: The proposed research model of the present study

Considering that internationalisation and its various forms is still relatively a new field in Lebanese HEIs and that there has been limited research on this topic, this study aims to explore factors affecting the responsiveness to internationalisation within HEIs in Lebanon, focusing on private universities, by answering the main research question and the sub-questions that have been presented in Chapter 1.

## 4.10 Conclusion

Based on this empirical and theoretical review, the implementation of internationalisation is influenced several factors including pressure from the institution itself and from the surrounding environment as well as organisational characteristics. These interaction of these factors affects the responsiveness of HEIs towards internationalisation, and this will be explored empirically in this study. Institutional theory and diffusion of innovation theory were identified since they represent a framework for analysing the responsiveness to, and strategic implementation of, internationalisation. The methodological approach and research methods used in this study will be explored in the following chapter.

# Chapter 5: Research Methodology and Design

Following the empirical and theoretical review presented in the previous chapter, which identified various factors that can influence the implementation of internationalisation and guided the formulation of the current research questions, this chapter outlines the methodology and frameworks that have been employed in the current study to answer the proposed research questions and empirically explore the factors discussed in the previous chapter. The research philosophy, approach to theory development, research strategies, methods of data collection and analysis, as well as ethical considerations, are discussed in detail in the following sections.To address the research questions, two data collection methods have been selected. The first phase of the study is based on documentary analysis and the second phase on qualitative interviewing. With these two approaches combined, the aim was to construct a valid assessment of the factors that influence the implementation of internationalisation.



## 5.1 Research Philosophy

The concept of ‘research onion’ proposed by Saunders et al. (2019) is presented in Figure 5.1 (below) and is used to illustrate the following discussion around this research project’s methodology.

Diagram, venn diagram

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Figure 5.1: Research process onion (Saunders et al., 2019)

Positivism and interpretivism are two competing epistemologies that have dominated research. The positivist philosophy supports the presence of a singular reality (truth) that a researcher can examine via observations and measurements (Bowling, 2014). The meaning of a situation, however, is not of interest to a positivist as s/he does not think that this concept can be objectively measured (Bowling, 2014). Therefore, positivism frequently relies on the employment of quantitative research methods. This is the main reason why quantitative methods are not chosen for this exploratory research. This research is studying the framework of internationalisation in the Lebanese private universities, and there is no set framework against which to measure the situation. The research is drawing a framework of approaches to internationalisation adopted by the chosen Lebanese private universities. On the other hand, interpretivism, which is the approach adopted in this study, argues that reality is a constituent of people’s subjective experiences of the external environment and therefore predominantly relies on the employment of qualitative research methods (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). Interpretivism allows researchers to take into consideration what people say, do or feel, and how they make meaning of the phenomena being studied (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). This research explores the understanding of the interviewees, their approach and experiences in internationalisation and its implementation. The research also compares this understanding and practice of the Lebanese Private universities to documentations presented by the universities as their guidelines.

The focal point of interpretivism is the meaning that individuals attach to their experiences and, as such, it allows the emergence of themes, patterns, and trends (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). This study explores the research participants’ experiences and understanding of the drivers for internationalism through semi-structured interviews, where every participation explains their understating of the practice and drivers for internationalisation as well as key features of internationalisation in their university. Interpretivism also enables researchers to understand experiences from an insider’s point of view (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). For these reasons, this research employs an interpretivist paradigm to explore and identify the factors that influence the internationalisation process, which is interpreted from the perspectives and personal experiences of individuals involved in the process, in addition to analysing the documentation presented and collected as guide and evidence.

Moreover, the most common methods when employing this philosophy are the interpretive approaches that rely heavily on naturalistic methods, such as interviewing, observation and analysis of existing texts (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006), meaning, in this study, the interpretation of interview transcriptions and available documentation. These methods allow an adequate dialogue between the researcher and the study subjects to collaboratively construct a meaningful understanding of the research of interest (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). Following the analysis of the documentation and the interviews answers, a construct of a meaningful understanding of the framework of internationalisation and its drivers will be presented. In short, the research adopts a qualitative research methodology to analyse primary data evident in the semi-structured interview answers, in addition to using primary documentary sources and available secondary data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the practice of internationalisation in the Lebanese private universities.

## 5.2 Approach to theory development

Two main approaches could be used in research to reach a conclusion, which are deductive and inductive reasoning. Deductive reasoning initiates from a general theory, from which a hypothesis emerges and is tested, and finally revised (Azungah, 2018). Inductive reasoning, on the other hand, starts from a particular observation and then evolves to a generalisation (Azungah, 2018). However, this research does not rely on either approach separately, but rather relies on a more flexible approach called the abductive approach. This approach enables the researcher to freely use, in a back-and-forth movement, both deductive and inductive reasoning at any time in the study (Awuzie and McDermott, 2017). Abductive reasoning has been proposed as a pragmatic alternative to overcome weaknesses of the inductive and deductive approaches. In fact, the abductive approach has been used in qualitative research and has been demonstrated to play a key role in qualitative data analysis (Dudovskiy, 2018).

An abductive reasoning approach starts with an incomplete set of data and observations then progresses to the likeliest reasonable explanation for that data set.With abductive reasoning, people make daily judgments based on incomplete and limited information. To summarise, figure 5.2 (below) reproduces Bryman (2015), outlining the use of all three approaches to reasoning. Abductive reasoning is argued to be the one that offers the best prediction that something might be true, based on structured experience and observations. This approach is best for this research where the interviewees explain their experiences, cite their observations, and demonstrate that their practice is a successful one toward internationalisation.

Diagram

Description automatically generated

Figure 5.2: Deductive, inductive and abductive reasoning (Bryman, 2015)

## 5.3 Methodological choice

Considering the research philosophy and approach selected above, the methodology of choice for answering the research questions set is a qualitative design. Using a qualitative research design can preserve chronological flow which allows the researcher to know which event or factor led to which consequences (Austin and Sutton, 2014). Although qualitative research may not be able to provide definitive answers to complex questions, it can help provide a better understanding and guide future more focused research (Austin and Sutton, 2014). Qualitative designs are often used when the research question involves non-numerical data that cannot be measured or counted (Hammarberg, et al., 2016). Data collected for this research is non-numerical and based on the interviewees’ understanding, meaning it is very subjective.

Qualitative approaches can comprise a wide range of data collection methods, including those that are used in the present study: (1) ‘in-depth interviews’ to understand a condition, experience, or event from a personal perspective and (2) ‘analysis of texts and documents’, such as government reports, media articles, websites, or diaries, to learn about distributed or private knowledge (Hammarberg, et al., 2016). Moreover, using a qualitative approach in the research design can allow researchers to learn more than they set out to discover, as these methods invite discussion and dialogue with the subjects (Hammarberg, et al., 2016). The interview approach adopted in this research was the semi-structured interview, having a set of questions to be used as guidance and to direct the interview.

## 5.4 Research Strategy

A research strategy is the process and general plan set by a researcher to answer the research question (Wedawatta et al., 2011). With the presence of various research strategies, it is important that a researcher carefully selects a strategy that is most appropriate to the research question at hand (Wedawatta et al., 2011). From the various strategies proposed by Sanders et al. (2013), secondary data analysis and case study strategies were chosen as the best methods for the current study, since they seek answers to the questions posted, collecting evidence on the subjective topics, using a predefined set of procedures to ensure clear answers are given, and then producing findings that were not hypothesised from the beginning.

Secondary data analysis and the case study strategies are qualitative research methods selected, out of the three main methods of participant observation, in-depth interviews, and focus groups. Participants have the opportunity of answering the research questions in a less formal situation, elaborating in more details as they see fit any concept deemed important out of their own experiences, which is what this research is exploring under the title of internationalisation.

Secondary data analysis is the second methodology means for this research focusing on documents collected from the universities and what is published online about any collaboration in Lebanon from international universities and programmes. Both methods allow a clear understanding of the rationale that dictate the kind of expected outcomes. Hewson (2006, p.274) defines secondary data analysis as “the further analysis of an existing dataset with the aim of addressing a research question distinct from that for which the dataset was originally collected and generating novel interpretations and conclusions.” This strategy involves the review of existing data that was collected by a certain party, other than the researcher, prior to the study and for purposes other than the current research question in order to acquire new insights through interpretation or presentation (Zikmund, 2010).

The main benefits of using already existing data records are that the process is fast and inexpensive, when compared to obtaining primary data. However, the researcher ought to always make sure the secondary data selected to be used in the study is up to date, verifiable and can best help address the research questions (Zikmund, 2010). Since the current study aims to identify the factors that influence the implementation of internationalisation in higher education based on the experience of each individual university, case study strategy was used because it is in line with Schramm’s (1971, p.6) definition of case studies: “The essence of a case study, the central tendency among all types of case study, is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented (or not implemented) and with what result.” Case study method is the best appropriate method that focuses on collecting qualitative data and using interviews, observations during the interview, and analysis of primary and secondary records, articles, and documentation, which were collected for this research as well.

This research is ‘illuminating a decision, or set of decisions’ (Schramm 1971, p.6) taken by university administrations on the process on internationalisation. Another variable that led to the choice of using case studies is the timing of this study’s field research in early 2020. The restrictions on mobility were implemented during the 2019-2020 pandemic to prevent the spread of Coronavirus disease-19 (COVID-19), resulting in significant societal and economic cost. Qualitative research strongly relies on direct interaction with individuals in case studies, focus groups, interviews, and others for data collection. Consequently, data collecting methodology for this research relied on case studies, which was the most feasible approach to carry out research during the lockdown in place at the time.

It is essential to mention here that a plethora of previous studies on internationalisation studied the topic in the same way, relying on a qualitative methodology, case studies, and documentary analysis using websites that provide easily accessible data. Moreover, the employment of the case study approach allows the researcher to investigate a topic of interest within its context (Yin, 2009). As seen in the literature, the internationalisation process is a complex organisational process that is difficult to isolate from its organisational context, stakeholders’ perceptions of internationalisation and the institutional pressures and organisational characteristics that may influence the decision to implement it. Thus, choosing a case study approach offers the opportunity of identifying the impact of these factors and exploring the extent to which the proposed concepts and theoretical frameworks are relevant. In addition, case studies are often used in research that aims to answer questions such as how and/or why, where the researcher has little control over events, and the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context (Yin, 2009). These three conditions are prevalent in the current research. In addition, the use of multiple sources of evidence is an important tactic in case study approaches since it allows researchers to ensure the richness of the phenomenon (Yin, 2009). Finally, it is advisable to utilise more than one case study in research: as such three institutions were selected to be included in the current study.

## 5.5 Time horizon

The time horizon for a research project can be divided to two categories, cross-sectional and longitudinal. Cross-sectional studies are a snapshot where data are collected at a certain point in time (Iovino and Tsitsianis, 2020). With longitudinal studies, on the other hand, participants are surveyed more than once over a long period of time. Since it is expensive and time consuming, the frequency of longitudinal studies is often less than that of cross-sectional studies (Bryman, 2016). Therefore, and given that the restrictions of longitudinal design apply to the current research, the research was consequently conducted as a cross-sectional one, comparing many different variables and data at a single point in time. Changes of decisions and practice of the universities along a timeline are not of interest to this research, but decisions made in the initial stages of adopting internationalisation are being explored, providing information on what decisions are made across all the universities under study, at one point in time. The use of a cross-sectional approach in this research allows the research to be re-conducted in a different time interval, enabling a comparison between decisions made now and decision made later in time, for better evaluation and assessment of the factors affecting internationalisation decisions of private universities in Lebanon.

## 5.6 Data collection techniques

Qualitative data were the main type of data collected and analysed in this study. Both the semi-structured interviews and the documentary analysis provided qualitative data on the forms of internationalisation implemented in the three institutions under study, as well as the factors that have influenced the internationalisation process.

### 5.6.1 Semi-structured interviews

Surveying is the collection of data related to the research topic from a sample of participants through documenting their answers to certain pre-assigned questions (Ponto, 2015). Surveys can be adapted to meet the needs of qualitative research, quantitative research and even the combination of both approaches through mixed design research (Ponto, 2015). Differences between qualitative and quantitative surveys should be taken into consideration when deciding on the strategies to be employed in the research. A comparison between quantitative and qualitative surveys is illustrated by Jansen at al. (2010) in Table 5.1 (below). For this research, a qualitative survey in the form of a semi-structured interview was selected to explore the factors that influence the internationalisation process in HEIs.

Table

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Table 5.1. Comparison between qualitative and quantitative surveys (Jansen, 2010)

A semi-structured interview is composed of a flexible interview procedure with the possibility of follow-up questions and inquiries as the interview unfolds (DeJonckheere and Vaughn, 2019). Semi-structured interviews are an effective method to employ when the researcher aims to collect qualitative data, explore participants’ points of view and feelings on a certain topic, or discuss sensitive topics (DeJonckheere and Vaughn, 2019). Semi-structured interviews can allow researchers to deviate from the research agenda and delve into unforeseen issues related to the topic of interest (Newcomer et al., 2015). They require the preparation of an interview schedule that outlines the topic to be discussed and the questions to be addressed (Newcomer et al., 2015; Ayres, 2008). Once the interview guide is developed, it is still considered a work in progress; researchers need to make use of the insight and feedback provided during the first interview to refine and adjust the interview guide. Interview guides allow researchers to explore the topic with various respondents in a systematic and comprehensive way and help keep the interview focused on the study topic (Jamshed, 2014). The questions in the interview guide include the core research question and other associated questions.

To capture the data more effectively, interviews are often recorded using a recorder or the researcher takes extensive hand notes to document the responses (Jamshed, 2014). Researchers can better focus on the content of the interview and the verbal prompts when the interview is recorded (Jamshed, 2014). Interviews conducted for this research were recorded and then transcribed. Semi-structured interviews are well suited to capturing the thoughts of individuals. They also exhibit a flexibility that allows the researcher to explore the topic in more depth at a relaxed and engaging environment (Newcomer at al., 2015). Interviewing also had the advantage of providing room for interaction between the researcher and the respondents. If necessary, questions and answers can be clarified and elaborated upon. The interview also provides an opportunity to gather data in the respondent’s own words, to focus inquiry more pointedly toward the study’s central questions, to draw data efficiently from a setting (Bryman, 2008), and to seek information directly from knowledgeable persons at the HEI. For the current research, semi-structured interviews aimed to collect information on the factors that affect the responsiveness of the Lebanese private universities to implement internationalisation. In conducting the interviews, the first questions sought background information to learn about the role of the participant in the university, his/her experience with internationalisation, and his/her relationship to the internationalisation process in this university. Consequently, and based on the study’s research questions, the following indicative questions were included:

1. What are the internal and external pressures on the university that influenced the decision to implement internationalisation?;
2. How was the process of internationalisation planned and what areas of university activities were identified as key parts of internationalisation?;
3. To what extent did you identify internationalisation policies and goals from the experiences of other Lebanese higher education institutions?;
4. How was the process of internationalisation managed? Who were the key leaders and/or the change agents driving the process? Did they exist within the institution or were they recruited to the university to adapt to internationalisation? At what levels of the organisation do they sit?;
5. What are the university stakeholders’ perceptions of internationalisation and has it affected the university’s responsiveness to its implementation?;
6. Has there been resistance to any aspects of internationalisation? And if so, from which stakeholders?; and
7. What is your assessment of the university’s internationalisation process? Which areas have been successful, and which have been less successful? And why?

In total, three respondents participated in the research (one from each selected university). Respondents were identified from the university websites and contacts within the university. The literature argues that although having a small number of cases in research has various limitations related to generalisability, it still holds some advantages such as it presents “insights into the structures and processes involved in creating certain findings, aids appropriate interpretation, and enhances the validity of the research and its meaningfulness” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 16).

### 5.6.2 Documentary analysis

Documentary analysis is the procedure of analysing and reviewing documents with the purpose of extracting information of relevance to the research question (Bowen, 2009). Like other qualitative methods, documentary analysis requires the examination and interpretation of data in order to understand, draw meaning, and obtain evidence-based knowledge (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Rapley, 2007). The documentary analysis process includes finding, selecting, appraising, and synthesising data contained in documents (Gross, 2018). In research, documentary analysis is usually used as a complement to other research methods and is often combined with other qualitative research methods and sources of evidence to allow for triangulation; these sources are usually interviews and observations (Yin and Campbell, 1994; Gross, 2018). Researchers often use documentary analysis in combination with interviews for various reasons including to: contextualise collected data during interviews; generate possible questions that could be asked during the interview; and to corroborate the data collected from both sources (Bowen, 2009). Document gathering and analysis complement the semi-structured interviews conducted at the three universities under study in Lebanon for this internationalisation study. In addition, documentary analysis is also applied to case studies – intensive studies that produce detailed descriptions of a single phenomenon, organisation or programme (Mills, Bonner, and Francis, 2006) – similar to this research study.

Guided by the above discussion, and by the main research question which is “what factors affect the response of Lebanese private universities to internationalisation?”, the researcher gathered and analysed documents provided by the universities, and found online authentic published evidence of the missions, visions and strategies followed by universities under study. Comparatively speaking, to answer the research questions, information derived from the documents collected will be analysed and compared with primary data retrieved from the semi-structured interviews. This is advised by Atkinson and Coffey (1997, p. 47) who note that “we should not use documentary sources as surrogates for other kinds of data. We cannot, for instance, learn through records alone how an organisation actually operates day-by-day.” Documents gathered pertain directly to what international programmes, if any, are present at universities under study, their definitions, and functions. Information derived from documentary analysis will help answer several research questions by authenticating the interview answers, offer evidence of existence of programmes mentioned in the interviews, offer numbers of student enrolments in mentioned programmes and other evidence.

The documents collected are authenticating evidence and descriptions of the internationalisation process compared with universities missions and visions. Researchers have found various advantages to the use of documentary analysis in research (Bowen, 2009; Gross, 2018). Documentary analysis is an efficient method, it is cost efficient, less time consuming, and stable documents are easily accessible on the internet with less obtrusiveness and reactivity and, in line with what Merriam (1988) observes, are not affected by the research process. Yin and Campbell (1994) have also argued that information from the documents such as exact names, references, and details of events makes documents advantageous in the research process and can provide a wide range of coverage.

However, researchers also need be cautious and critical of the documents included in the analysis. The selection of documents also needs to be systematic, in which the researcher ought to define clear inclusionary and exclusionary criteria to determine which documents are included in the study (Gross, 2018). The researcher needs to assess the relevance of the document in relation to their research purpose. That is a reason for collecting and analysing specific documents on processes of internationalisation and programme descriptions. It is also important to assess their level of authenticity, credibility, accuracy, and representativeness of the selected documents as well as their sense of being comprehensive (covering the research topic completely) or selective (covering only certain elements or parts of the topic) (Bowen, 2009). The researcher also needs to determine whether the document contains a great deal of details on some elements of the topic, but not on other aspects, or it is well-detailed and balanced across the various aspects of the topic. For this research, the presence of the documents collected on the universities’ websites, and the agreements of collaboration between the Lebanese universities and the international programmes is highly valued.

In addition, the original purpose of the document (why it was created and who were the target audience?) also need to be determined (Bowen, 2009). The source of the document also needs to be considered (Bowen, 2009). Researchers should pay attention to the quality of the document and the level of evidence it can provide, rather than on the quantity of the documents analysed. For the above reasons, the secondary data (documents) were collected from the websites of the three selected case studies in addition to the annual report on higher education published by the Centre of Educational Research and Development (CERD). If data were not available on the websites, the researcher used contacts inside the universities to acquire pertinent documents. Moreover, the researcher also asked the selected study participants to provide any additional documents that they deemed relevant to the present study. Documentary analysis allowed the researcher to identify the various forms of internationalisation that have been implemented in the selected institutions and to complement and verify the information provided during the interviews. In addition, the documentary analysis allowed the researcher to describe the main common international projects that the surveyed universities were participating in, as part of their internationalisation activities.

## 5.7 Sampling Strategy

For the semi-structured interviews, this study employed a purposive sampling, which is a non-probability sampling technique that aims to focus on specific characteristics of a population that are of interest, and which best enables the researcher to answer the research questions (Zikmund, 2010). As such, three private universities were selected based on the researcher’s knowledge that these universities have implemented some form of internationalisation. Due to its non-probability technique, purposive sampling has one main limitation, that it does not allow the generalisation of the study findings to the entire higher education system. However, the results of this study could offer a baseline framework about the factors that affect the responsiveness to implementing internationalisation in the chosen universities in Lebanon and as a guide to future research.

### 5.7.1 Election of the sample

There are currently 46 universities in Lebanon, all fall under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. The Lebanese University is the only public university, where all others are classified as private universities. The sample of three universities deployed for this research covers the private sector representation of the university population in Lebanon and were the best choice as far as the 2020 pandemic restrictions allowed at the time of conducting the research.

Although the final decision to implement internationalisation processes in HEIs mainly lies at the university level (such as the president, vice-president, and other authoritative personnel) the stakeholders at the universities also play a highly influential consultative role in these processes and can be directly involved during the execution of the process. Moreover, these stakeholders are expected to play an important role in the decision-making processes and the internationalisation initiatives that lead up to organisational activities related to its implementation. As such, the units of data collection – the individual respondents - were key university personnel who are considered stakeholders in the internationalisation process. The respondents were also targeted since they were well informed about the internationalisation processes within their institution, as well as knowledgeable about the organisational characteristics of the university and its leadership. Therefore, it could be said that the respondents’ selection was mainly based on their possession of insight and knowledge related to the research question rather than elitist identification.

## 5.8 Ethical considerations and the research fieldwork

Ethics are “norms for conduct that distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour” (Resnik, 2015). Abiding by ethical guidelines assures that researchers are held accountable to the study participant involved in their research, to other researchers in terms of authorship, and to the public by disclosing any conflict of interest (Resnik, 2015) and ensuring the truth of their conclusions. Therefore, principles like respect, beneficence and justice should be inherent in a researcher.

Prior to the commencement of the research, the research proposal, the interview guide that included the indicative research questions, and the informed consent form (in both Arabic and English language), along with the Institutional Review Board’s application to Conduct Research involving Human Participants were submitted to Staffordshire University’s ethics committee for review and approval. The application included a full description of the project undertaken including background information on the topic of the study, the study rationale, a detailed plan for recruiting and selecting the participants, the anticipated risks and benefits on the participants, a description of how privacy and confidentiality would be ensured, and a discussion of the potential importance of the research. Details on how informed consent would be obtained from the participants was also an integral part of the application. Informed consent is a fundamental and important requirement for ethical considerations in conducting research that involve human participants (WHO, 2014). Seeking informed consent from study participants safeguards the subjects’ dignity, rights, safety, and well-being and ensures that subjects can freely decide to participate in the study based on his/her personal interest, values and priorities (WHO, 2014).

Approval to conduct the research project was granted in December 2019 (Approval Letter is presented in Appendix 1). During the research fieldwork, various steps were taken to abide by the ethical guidelines. For confidentiality purposes, the institutional and interviewee names were de-identified to remain anonymous. All information collected through the semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis were stored securely and kept confidentially. The data collected from the interview were de-identified (the respondents’ names removed); each interview and each respondent were assigned a different identifier. The latter was kept in a separate folder for the purpose of confidentiality.

Prior to the start of each interview, the researcher used a consent script to inform participants about the study objectives and the recording of the interview and explicitly asked for the participants’ verbal consent to participate. The date, time and the participants’ responses were recorded and documented. The participants were assured that all the information obtained during the interview would be kept anonymous and confidential and that participation was voluntary and that s/he had the right to refuse to answer any question s/he is uncomfortable with or withdraw from the research at any time without any implications. Participants were also informed that the data collected would be exclusively used for research purposes and be destroyed once the research has ended. Also, during the interviews, the interviewer made sure not to influence the respondents’ opinions in any way possible.

Finally, during transcription, the researcher made sure that he/she was not biased to any group in his/her writing.

Once the respondents were identified, they were contacted by a detailed email, explaining the purpose of the research, their availability to have a meeting to discuss the topic, the time required to participate in the interview, a detailed explanation of the research agenda and questions to be discussed in the interview and an informed consent form. The response rate for the emails was very low; in fact, most of the contacted participants did not respond to the email. To overcome this challenge, a follow-up email was sent a week after the first email to remind the participant to respond, if interested in participating in the study. However, the response rate was still very low, so the researcher acquired the phone number and university extensions for identified participants and they were contacted by phone and briefed about the project and if they were interested. The researcher sent them an email following up on the phone call, proposing a day and time for the interview. In the recruitment email (Appendix 2), a section on informed consent was provided stating to the email recipients the following: “participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the interview at any time. The study is completely anonymous, therefore, the institution’s name, your name and any other identifying information will not be recorded and reported. Prior to the start of the interview, I will use a consent script to inform you about the study objectives and explicitly ask you to provide verbal consent to participate. Your response will be recorded and documented.”

There were no issues to report elating to concerns over consent, anonymity and confidentiality as informed consent and the purpose of the research were clearly stated before the start of each interview. The participants acknowledged that they understood the purpose of the study and their confidentiality would be safeguarded. The semi-structured interviews were personally administered by the researcher after seeking approval for their participation at the beginning of the interview. In addition, although the interviews were to be initially conducted face to face, the plan was revised to conduct virtual interviews to respect the guidelines imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent public health measures (lockdowns, curfews, and social distancing). On average, the interviews lasted between 30 to 45 minutes, depending on the level of responsiveness and engagement of the participants. The interviewer was able to ask each question prepared in the interview guide without facing any problems. Due to poor internet connections, some technical difficulties arose during some of the interviews (such as the participant or the interviewer dropping out due to the instability of the internet), however, the problems were temporary, and the interviews proceeded on schedule.

It is worth reporting that various challenges were faced in finding participants that were willing to accept participation in the project. Given the current situation of the country (economic turmoil, political instability, social and health problems, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the aftermath of the Beirut blast), this was expected as all Lebanese citizens, including those in the academic sector, were facing a multitude of anguish and are going through difficult times. This affected their level of responsiveness to emails and invitations to participate in this project. Even among those who accepted to participate in the project, their response to our questions was timid at best. You will notice that in chapter 7, that participant one was the most engaging, while the other two participants were far less committed. It is important to note that participants 2 and 3 felt that their privacy was violated because of the questions and thus they refrained from sharing long answers relating to our research. Consequently, in chapter 7, the input of participants 2 and 3 will seem marginalised and their overall contributions will also seem limited compared to participant 1, whose quotations feature prominently.

Challenges were also faced when searching and accessing relevant documents for the documentary analysis. Documents related to internationalisation processes in the selected institutions were non-existent on their websites. Therefore, during the interviews, the researcher emphasised to participants the need for any documents that may help in identifying the various forms of internationalisation that has been implemented in the institution. Examples of these document include: (1) data on international student recruitment, (2) data on international research collaboration, (3) documents that show the incorporation of intercultural and international dimensions in the curriculum, teaching, research and extracurricular activities, (4) data on staff mobility - sending faculty members abroad or recruiting foreigners as faculty, academic staff and researchers, (5) data on online learning courses and distance learning, (6) documents on convergence of university credits and degrees to other institutions within or outside the country, (7) documents on the credit transfer schemes allowing students to validate study credits obtained from other institutions within or outside the country.

Due to the limited availability of relevant documents, the researcher chose not to be very selective in the document inclusion process. While doing this, the researcher also had to keep in mind and ensure that the data collected are relevant and would enable the researcher to conduct the documentary analysis as planned. Availability of relevant documents was relatively limited, as most participants were not willing to share documents related to internationalisation activities within their university or promised to send documents but did not even after various follow-up attempts. The participants were also assured that these documents would be destroyed or deleted once the research project has ended and that no identifying data would be extracted from the shared documents.

## 5.9 Reliability and validity

Validity in qualitative research refers to the “appropriateness” of the tools, processes, and data involved in the research (Leung, 2015). It questions whether the research question is valid for the desired outcome, the methodology employed is appropriate for answering the research question, the design is valid for the methodology, the sampling and data analysis is suitable, and the results and conclusions are valid for the sample and context (Leung, 2015). The proper selection of the methodology enables researchers to detect the findings/phenomena in the appropriate context for it to be valid, with consideration to cultural and contextual variables (Leung, 2015). The sampling procedures and methods also need to be appropriate for the research paradigm. For data extraction and analysis, several methods can be adopted to enhance the validity including: the triangulation of resources and theories; the researcher’s well-documented audit trail of materials and processes; multidimensional analysis as concept- or case-orientated; and respondent verification (Finfgeld-Connett, 2010; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Carcary, 2009; Jansen, 2010; Leung, 2015).

While reliability refers to exact replicability of the process and results in quantitative research, the definition of reliability is challenging in qualitative research with diverse paradigms (Leung, 2015). The literature shows that the essence of reliability aligns with consistency in qualitative research (Carcary, 2009; Grossoehme, 2014). However, a margin of variability in the results of qualitative research is tolerated given that the methods and epistemologies employed constantly may result in data that are ontologically similar but may vary in richness and ambience within similar dimensions (Leung, 2015). Silverman (2009) recommends several approaches that can improve the reliability of qualitative research process and results: (1) refutational analysis, (2) constant data comparison, (3) comprehensive data use, (4) inclusive of the deviant case and use of tables. Researchers also need to verify the accuracy of the data extracted with constant comparison, in terms of form and context - a form of triangulation (Patton, 1999). In addition, the scope and analysis of data included ought to be as comprehensive and inclusive as possible with reference to quantitative aspects (Patton, 1999; Leung, 2015).

### 5.9.1 Reliability and validity of the interviews

To enhance the level of validity and reliability in interviews, some recommendations were proposed to ensure the absence of bias. Saunders et al. (2009, p. 328) argue “the 5Ps is a useful mantra: Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance” and planning is important when “you are going to demonstrate your credibility and obtain the confidence of the interviewees”. In the present study, to enhance the reliability of the interview process, the researcher used a semi-structured interview guide during the interview, which enhances reliability (Merton et al., 1990). Similarly, Silverman (1993) agrees that it become possible to replicate a study if the actions taken by the researcher are properly described and documented. In line with this argument, Stensaker (2004, p. 92) states that “high reliability during different interviews will depend on whether the followed procedures are identical from one interview to another, that the informants understand the questions the same way, and that the answers may be grouped without misunderstandings occurring.”

These factors have been taken into consideration in the current study. The researcher conducted all the interviews in person and the small number of interviews conducted were compensated in turn by the in-depth and detailed discussion. This was essential due to the limitations on time and resources of the study. The interviews lasted between 30 to 45 minutes, depending on the level of responsiveness and openness of the respondent. An interview guide was established prior to the interview and was used to guide the discussion and topics of the interviews. The questions consisted mainly of open-ended questions. However, it is important to note that, when necessary, the researcher chose to deviate from the interview guide in situations that required more probing of various statements to understand meanings attached with these statements. The interviews were transcribed directly afterwards to ensure accuracy.

### Reliability and Validity of the Documentary Analysis

Scholars advise researchers to go through a detailed planning process to ensure valid and reliable results before embarking on the process of document analysis. O’Leary (2014) recommends eight steps to the planning process that should be conducted not just in document analysis, but also in all textual analysis: (1) create a list of texts to explore (population, samples, respondents, participants); (2) consider how texts will be accessed with attention to linguistic or cultural barriers; (3) acknowledge and address biases; (4) develop appropriate skills for research; (5) consider strategies for ensuring credibility; (6) know the data that you are searching for; (7) consider ethical issues (confidential documents); and (8) have a backup plan.

Moreover, an additional eight steps have been recommended by O’Leary (2014) to sum up the issues arising that needs to be addressed to ensure the validity and reliability of document analysis: (1) gather relevant texts; (2) develop an organisation and management scheme; (3) make copies of the originals for annotation; (4) assess the authenticity of documents; (5) explore a document’s agenda, biases; (6) explore background information (tone, style, purpose); (7) ask questions about document (who produced it? why? when?); and (8) explore content.

The present study has taken these factors into consideration. First, the author or creator of the documents selected to be included in the study were checked, considering their subjectivity or identifying personal biases that they may bring into the research. The audience originally targeted in the document was also evaluated. The researcher also checked, within the information available and accessible, if the document was solicited, edited and/or anonymous. The latent content that exists in the document (style, tone, agenda, opinions) were also assessed. The researcher also used questions to confirm the data that has been collected from the documentary analysis during the interviews (form of triangulation) and confirmed the information collected through the documentary analysis by asking the interview participants to confirm the data collected, in order to assess the reliability and validity of the data.

## 5.10 Methods of Data Analysis

Qualitative data is usually subjective, rich, and contains in-depth information that displayed in the form of words (Wong, 2008). Analysing qualitative data often involves reading and reviewing a considerable number of transcripts scanning for differences and similarities, and consequently finding themes and categorising the data (Wong, 2008). Unlike with quantitative data, analysis of qualitative data is not a technical process, but rather dynamic, intuitive, and creative, involving reasoning, thinking and theorising (Wong, 2008). Qualitative data analysis refers to searching and arranging the information collected to acquire and increase the understanding of the topic of interest. Figure 5.3 shows the steps of qualitative data analysis and an analysis of the data from each data collection method used in the study is explained in the following sections.

Diagram

Description automatically generated

Figure 5.3: Steps of qualitative data analysis (Wong Li Ping, 2008)

### 5.10.1 Data analysis of the interviews

The first step for analysing data from the semi-structured interviews was the transcription of interview recordings and notes. After that the data were categorised, the researcher looked for ways to consolidate themes and subthemes found in multiple answers. In other words, the analysis comprised looking for the “stable” and “order and recurrence” in the interview data as well as the “precarious” and “the ambiguities and singularities” (Feilzer, 2010, p.10). For the most part, the process involved categorising the data. This entails “making sense of large amounts of data by reducing the volume of raw information, followed by identifying significant patterns, and finally drawing meaning from data and subsequently building a logical chain of evidence” (Wong Li Ping, 2008). This is the most important phase of the analysis; by assigning the data into categories and allocating identified themes, this sets the stage for analysing and drawing meaningful conclusions (Wong, 2008).

### 5.10.2 Data analysis in documentary analysis

The iterative process of documentary analysis requires skimming (superficial examination), reading (thorough examination), and interpretation, which merges components of both content and thematic analysis (Bowen, 2009 Gross, 2018). Content analysis is a method in which the information collected is organised into categories that are related to the research question. This analysis comprises the first phase of the document review that allows the researcher to identify relevant passages of text and data from the documents. This step requires the researcher to have the capacity to identify pertinent information and to isolate it from data that are not pertinent (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Thematic analysis is a process which involves pattern recognition within the data collected, and the emergence of themes that become categories for analysis (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Thematic analysis requires a more focused and detailed re-reading and review of the pertinent data within the document, in which the researcher delves deeper into the selected data and performs coding and category construction to expose themes pertinent to a phenomenon. Therefore, the documentary analysis process requires researchers to demonstrate objectivity - present the research material fairly - and sensitivity - responding to even subtle cues to meaning - in the data selection and analysis process (Bowen, 2009). The use of both methods of analysis led the researcher to identify themes and categories that were integrated with the data collected by the second method used in the study (Bowen, 2009).

## 5.11 Reflective analysis of methodological approaches

In any research study, the methodological approaches chosen to collect and analyse data have both benefits and limitations. The benefits of the selected methodologies include their appropriateness for addressing the research question, their ability to provide reliable and valid data, and their feasibility for the study setting and resources. However, the methodologies may also have limitations, and in this research, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on research sample size, where the researcher had to reduce the sample size from six participants, due to social distancing measures and sickness absence, to three who were still willing to participate in the interviews. The Lebanese environment also presented difficulties in conducting the research activities and difficulties in communication with participants which was highly time-consuming.

In addition, another limitation arose from the non-probability purposive sampling strategy that was employed to select the universities and the study participants as well as the small number of institutions included in the study. This sampling strategy and the small number of cases included does not allow for the generalisation of the findings, however the conformity of the answers is an indication of the framework to be explored, highlighting the similarities of approaches, and understanding of each of the studied universities. Moreover, and in the present study, although the use of cross-sectional research design can reduce the validity of the findings, as compared to results from a longitudinal study (Babbie et al., 2001) it was still realised in this research because one of its features is that it compares individuals or cases at one point in time, where the comparison mitigated the smaller sample size due to pandemic-led social restrictions. The research also aimed at exploring the status quo at one point in time which is the understanding of the current approach to internationalisation in Lebanon, making the cross-sectional research design the most appropriate design. This cross-sectional research gives a unique depth of understanding of situation which is difficult to form through other methods over time. Respondents can freely disclose their experiences, practices, and thoughts on the internationalisation process, answering open-ended questions and giving answers that are comparable. It might be difficult to draw conclusions about the long-term impacts of internationalisation on various aspects of university operations and performance, but these limitations of cross-sectional research designs are drawbacks that do not affect this research.

## 5.12 Conclusion

This research aimed to determine the factors affecting the responsiveness of three Lebanese private universities to internationalisation. To meet this objective, this chapter has outlined the design and implementation of the research project, which is based on an interpretive philosophy and a qualitative research design that employs both documentary analysis and semi-structured interviewing for the data collection process. Together, both phases of data collection and the employed methods of data analyses have enabled the researcher to acquire a thorough view on the topic. The planning phase for seeking ethical approval and the processes that were undertaken to ensure the study abides by ethical research guidelines were also outlined. Moreover, this chapter has listed and justified the methods that have been employed to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected in this study. This has strengthened and consolidated the findings of this research, which are presented in the next chapters.

# Chapter 6: Documentary Analysis

## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the documentary analysis in six sections. The first section gives a definition of documentary analysis and its purpose for this research study and the second presents the general results of the documents collected and shared. The third section pinpoints how the documents relate to the research questions and the fourth section gives a definition and a detailed analysis of each of the documents included in this study. Then the chapter findings are summarised in section five, and the relevance of the analysis summarised in section six.

### 6.1.1: Documentary analysis: definition and purpose

The purpose of this research is to identify the forms of internationalisation implemented and analyse the main internationalisation-related projects, in which the surveyed universities participated as part of their internationalisation activities. Documentary analysis was a secondary method of data collection alongside semi-structured interviews, used to verify answers provided in the interviews, after transcription and coding of the answers. The documentary analysis investigated the formal paperwork presented by the universities as preparation, measurement, and proof of their internationalisation processes, in addition to the information retrieved from the internet on projects included in internationalisation activities of the selected universities.

## 6.2 General results of the documents:

This research explores the Lebanese universities' model, or models, of internationalisation. Globally, there is not one specific model that is followed by all universities. To better understand the framework of internationalisation, the research questions probed what motivates the selected Lebanese universities to adopt and implement internationalisation. As a result of the documents collected and shared by the surveyed universities, it was clear that all three universities participated in the following international initiatives to a high degree: enhancing research projects; increasing student mobility, attaining accreditation at an international level; and working on the internal successes of the institution. The latter involved building a global persona for the respective universities, including a strategic plan for internationalisation, and enhancing the faculties and departmental academic capacities to operate on a global level. This constitutes the internationalisation framework of these Lebanese universities which corresponds to with wider internationalisation trends within the HEIs in Lebanon. All three universities have an almost similar outlook on the internationalisation process and its implementation, which will be discussed in more detail in chapter 8. Table 6.1 (below) demonstrates the documents collected and analysed in this research, in addition to the sources the documents were obtained from.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Title of document** | **Source** |
| UNIMED Consortium -the Mediterranean Universities Union | * Online document. * Questionnaire provided by UNI-1 |
| Erasmus programme and Erasmus plus | * Online document * Online report:   <http://erasmusplus-lebanon.org/content/24> |
| MED2Iah Mediterranean | * Online document * Universities enrolment documents |
| Institutional self-evaluation tool for internationalisation | * University documents |
| 21st century skills framework | * Online document * Universities’ documents |

Table 6.1: Titles and Sources of the collected documents

## 6.3 How the documents relate to the research questions

This section will be based on the types of documents that were shared by the surveyed universities and documents that were freely available online and how they relate to the research questions. A section examining programme descriptions based on the submitted documentation and online data on each programme will be included. Revisiting the research questions, it is worth mentioning that the research is probing into the framework that the universities have adopted based on the drivers for internationalisation detailed in Table 7.5 (below) and derived from the following main research questions:

1. What is the relationship between internationalisation and institutional theory and how it affects responsiveness?
2. What are the organisational characteristics of the universities that favour internationalisation?
3. What is the association between the university stakeholders’ perceptions of internationalisation and their responsiveness to its implementation?; and
4. What is the link between internationalisation and student enrolment?

After analysing the interview answers and the documents available, the researcher found that all three case study universities have joined UNIMED and are extremely interested in how it affects their internationalisation strategy and implementation (research questions 2 and 3). All three universities explained that their respective universities participate in the UNIMED consortium, because, and as clearly mentioned on the UNIMED consortium website:

*“it provides an instrumental platform of diverse competencies and expertise that could be mobilised when and as required. This extensive network also provides a readily available stakeholders pool that is useful to engage in the events, meetings, and activities of the project.*”

This translates to the key activities that the Lebanese universities are interested in, focusing on the number of enrolments, enhancing the internationalisation of the curriculum, staff knowledge, and student mobility. Two universities stressed that they have participated in the project because it is a unique opportunity to bring universities from two different regions together and allowing diverse cultures to connect and coordinate projects. The main internationalisation-related projects that the surveyed universities participated in are the Erasmus programme and Erasmus plus, and MED2Iah Mediterranean countries towards internationalisation at home. The Erasmus plus programme clarified benefits to universities on its website as such:

“*Organisations wanting to participate in Erasmus+ may engage in a number of development and networking activities, including strategic improvement of the professional skills of their staff, organisational capacity building, and creating transnational cooperative partnerships with organisations from other countries in order to produce innovative outputs or exchange best practices”.*

The participating universities have already mentioned the above points as their key activities, interests and their external drivers for internationalisation (relating the answers directly to the first research question). All three universities are into the Erasmus programme, implementing what it offers, and securing opportunities for funding and collaboration with other universities in Europe that it offers. The first surveyed university (hereafter UNI-1) explained that participating in such a programme is a two-way street, giving students an opportunity to pursue their education and participate in quality research, as well as collaborating with a new culture, allowing mobility and new experiences (relating directly to the fourth research question).

## 6.4 Definition and analysis of the documents

### 6.4.1 UNIMED the Mediterranean Universities Union

Participation in UNIMED was a common key activity that drove the implementation of internationalisation processes within the surveyed universities. It can be seen to relate directly to institutional theory, namely the rules and regulations, requirements, and qualifications to be accepted in the global society of HE. UNI-1 explained that through the UNIMED questionnaire (document included) all participating universities:

*“.. were invited by UNIMED and through the consortia and we found that we had common goals among ourselves and …. we were able to understand each other better and we were able to understand the framework of internationalisation.”*

UNIMED is an association of 138 universities from 23 countries of the Mediterranean basin, as of March 2021. Through different scientific fields, UNIMED aims to develop scientific, cultural, social, and economic cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean area. The image that represents this union is that of a “university without walls”. UNIMED carries out various internationalization activities including promoting the international dimension of universities; planning and fund-raising activities; promoting mobility in the Euro-Mediterranean region, for students, researchers and academic staff; technical assistance for the enhancement of quality assurance in university education; creating thematic subnetworks to foster the scientific cooperation within specific fields; organising meetings, discussions, seminars and round tables both at a national and international level; and training academic and administrative staff of universities, particularly for staff in International Relations Offices.

Through these initiatives over the past few decades, UNIMED has paved the way for collaborations and partnerships between universities of the Mediterranean, promoting it to become a point of reference for international university cooperation. UNIMED has established a second-level network, constituted by subnetworks focused on specific sectors, which aims to create a database of research centres, university departments, ongoing projects, and research lines, including existing partnerships in the selected fields. This network has allowed for an extensive exchange of information between participating universities and institutions, further paving the way for collaborations, partnerships, and joint projects. These projects aim to consolidate economic and social cohesion, to encourage cross-border, transnational, and interregional cooperation, also to promote local sustainable development. Another aim of these projects is to promote the harmonisation of the educational system, another key activity of internationalisation.

### 6.4.2 Erasmus Programme and Erasmus plus

The Erasmus Programme is a student exchange programme established by the European Union (EU) in 1987 that aims to promote student, staff, and faculty mobility. This program is a key driver for internationalisation at Lebanese universities, and its adoption can also increase student enrolment. The Erasmus Programme has grown significantly over the years and now includes more than 4,000 universities from 31 countries. In January 2014, the programme was expanded and rebranded as Erasmus Plus, which combines all the EU's current schemes for education, training, youth, and sport. Erasmus Plus not only covers European countries, but also includes a wide range of countries from other regions, such as the southern Mediterranean countries (Egypt, Algeria, Jordan, and Lebanon), the western Balkan countries (Albania and Bosnia), and Eastern partnerships (such as Armenia and Georgia). The main objective of the Erasmus Plus programme is to help generations of Europeans develop the skills, knowledge, and experience they need to become active citizens and tackle the challenges facing society, both now and in the future. All the surveyed universities acknowledged their participation in the Erasmus Plus programme, indicating the importance of this programme for internationalisation efforts at these institutions. By participating in the Erasmus Plus programme, these universities are able to establish partnerships and exchange programmes with other institutions around the world, promoting greater global engagement and understanding among their students, staff, and faculty.

### 6.4.3 MED2Iah Mediterranean countries towards internationalisation at home

The MED2Iah project was a common key activity of internationalisation among all three universities. The purpose of the project, which is co-funded by the Erasmus Plus programme, is to have an impact at the HE system level and enable reform processes at the national level in universities in the Mediterranean region. All three universities surveyed explained that, under this programme, they implemented a technology modernisation of their systems and educational technology, in addition to sharing knowledge and best practices. Through this project, policymakers will be supported in the development of evidence-based policies and regulations to allow for “modernisation” of the HE framework in participating countries. This project encourages stakeholders in HEIs to share their expertise in the reform process and to share their needs at the early stages of policy development. By providing support in developing these policies, the project aims to benefit the whole sector of higher education in the participating countries. The participation of various stakeholders, including personnel at the management level, and academic and administrative level in the project aims to allow for a successful implementation. As stated by the organisers, the objective of the project is threefold: (1) to outline the internationalisation landscapes of Mediterranean Partner Countries (PC) HEIs and to identify levels of integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curricula of PC HEIs; (2) to improve the capabilities of PC HEIs for internationalisation through staff training and by translating general awareness of the Internationalisation at Home (IaH) concept into streamlined institutional strategies and action plans; and (3) to build students’ intercultural knowledge and sensitivity to cultural diversity by transforming the International Relations Offices (IROs) of PC HEIs into vibrant multicultural focal points.

The project supports internationalisation of participating universities through various activities. The MED2Iah project initiates the process of internationalisation through an institutional IaH Self-Evaluation Tool in the form of questionnaire with multiple-choice and open response questions. This tool is used for collecting institutional data related to the key aspects of internationalisation. The questionnaire includes sections related to general institutional information; internationalisation policy/strategy; internationalisation patterns in terms of student, academic and staff mobility; internationalisation in terms of educational programmes, research, projects and events. The report drafted from this questionnaire is used as a basis for creating a university strategy and action plan for internationalisation and developing capacity-building programmes such as webinars, study visits, and trainings. This tool also helps establish a systematic data collection system to monitor the activities of internationalisation. Questions related to credit system adopted within the university, online degrees, language policy in the university, and attitude towards multiculturalism, are also part of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire also collects information on: the presence of internationalisation policies; person(s) responsible for internationalisation; priorities, funding sources, benefits and barriers, and motivations to internationalisation; partnerships, student and staff exchange programmes, international study related activities, dual degree programmes, participation in international projects, language courses, participation in international conferences, and international cooperation partners. The project also hosts a series of workshops and round table discussions on capacity building for personnel involved in the internationalisation process of the universities, such as academic staff, administrative staff, technical staff, and librarians. Topics such as internationalisation of the curriculum, global skills development in a local context, virtual mobility, campus diversity and intercultural engagement are discussed in these workshops and webinars. In addition, the project develops and enhances the institutional capacities for international and regional collaborations through arranging site visits to foreign universities such as visits to the Euro-Mediterranean University EMUNI in Slovenia, the Catholic University of Murcia/UCAM in Spain, Unipegaso in Italy, and the University of Montpellier UM in France. Moreover, the project also develops the Institutional Intercultural Environment of participating universities through producing guides for international students, digital storytelling to encourage an intercultural environment and student boot camps.

### 6.4.4 Institutional Self-Evaluation Tool for Internationalisation

The internationalisation at home project involves the use of an institutional self-evaluation tool to collect data on key aspects of internationalisation in universities. This tool is used to assess the internationalisation efforts of the participating universities and to identify areas for improvement. One of the universities involved in the project shared the completed evaluation tool with the researcher, which allowed for a more detailed analysis of the university's internationalisation efforts. By reviewing the completed evaluation tool, the researcher was able to identify various dimensions of internationalisation within the university, including its policies, strategies, programmes, and initiatives related to internationalisation. This information provided valuable insights into the university's approach to internationalisation and the various factors that influence its efforts in this area. In addition, reviewing the completed evaluation tool allowed the researcher to verify the information discussed during the interview with university officials, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the university's internationalization efforts.

*‘Through the information provided in the questionnaire, we identified various aspects related to internationalisation in university’ - UN1:*

*The team responsible for implementing internationalisation activities within the university included, from the most important member to the least: (1) Member of the Rectorate, (2) Policy advisor for internationalisation, (3) Delegate of the Academic Senate, (4) Member of the Administration Council, (5) Rector, (6) Head of the international office, (7) Deans, (8) Member of the Scientific Council, and (9) the Quality Assurance Office.*

The document also shows that the university has developed and documented an internationalisation strategy. When the university was asked in the questionnaire to rank the top priorities activities for implementing internationalisation processes, the response identified the following to be highly ranked priorities: attract students at all levels of studying; internationalise teaching and learning; provide our students with the possibility of studying abroad; establish cooperative relations with other foreign institutions in research; create an internationalised study environment at home; develop learning and teaching partnerships with other institutions; improve our position in international/national rankings; attract international professors and academics; and provide our staff with opportunities for international experiences. According to the self-evaluation tool, most of the internationalisation activities within the university were funded by national and international internationalisation programmes, with only minor contributions from the budget of the university.

Capacity building and other development cooperation programmes were the main activities that received funding and financing. The benefits of internationalisation as perceived by the university included: increased international awareness and deeper comprehension of global issues; increased competitiveness of teaching and learning provision; increased international cooperation and capacity building; improved academic research and knowledge; increased internationalisation of the curricula; improved image of the institution; increased cooperation and networking with international professors and academics; increased funding and diversified financing; and opportunities to benchmark international performance of the institution. The barriers to implementation of internationalisation processes were: lack of agreements regulating the mutual recognition of ECTS or similar credits; lack of funding provided to potential participants in mobility programmes; lack of a regulatory framework to assess the quality of international programmes; lack of international partnerships and cooperation; lack of information resources and expertise provided to students and academics; and lack of language proficiency among students and academics.

The reasons for engaging in internationalisation activities were multi-faceted and included to: prepare internationally and inter-culturally aware graduates; increase student enrolment in specific programmes the institution provides; promote an internationalised environment on campus; strengthen cooperation with institutions abroad; increase the institution’s revenues; attract international talents (student and academics); improve the prestige of the institution; and stimulate research activity in the institution. According to the self-study tool, the internationalisation activities implemented in this university were: joint/dual degree programmes; involvement in providing some internationalised courses; providing internationalisation opportunities using online learning; and providing educational programmes to students in other countries through partner institutions. Specifically, the joint degree programme is in collaboration with a university in German. The university is also involved in outgoing student exchange programmes in the following countries: Italy, Slovenia, Germany, and Romania.

The factors listed as barriers to fostering student mobility among students included: insufficient funding; lack of knowledge about opportunities; fear of isolation or different cultures; insufficient language skills (and language training options); impacts on existing friends and relationships; lack of relevant opportunities; financial implications of extending studies (additional debt); lack of information about funding opportunities; lack of awareness of institutional support; possible negative impact on degree outcome; issues of credit recognition and transfer, or rigid course structures; loss of potential to earn while abroad; personal barriers; and the complexity of application procedures.

The university has also taken part in exchange programmes of academic staff and training visits for administrative staff. The university have also had incoming international visiting academic and administrative staff. When asked about the barriers facing the fostering of internationalisation among academic staff, the following factors were highly ranked: insufficient funding; lack of knowledge about opportunities; insufficient language skills (and language training options); lack of relevant opportunities; lack of information about funding opportunities; lack of institutional support; lack of instruction in international and intercultural issues; personal barriers; and the complexity of application procedures.

In terms of research, the university has participated in 9 international conferences in the past 2 years and staff have published over 600 papers in international journals. The university has also been involved in a number of international research projects, involving more than 100 researchers. In addition, the university has also been using an e-learning tool (online study for teaching and learning). It also offers several language courses including Italian, German, Persian, Turkish, Spanish, French and Arabic, in addition to English.

### 6.4.5 The 21st Century Competencies Framework

According to the information provided, one of the universities (UN1) is actively engaged in internationalising its curriculum by aligning programme and course learning outcomes in its School of Education with 21st century competencies. The 21st century Competencies Framework is a widely recognised set of skills that are considered essential for students to develop to be prepared for, and to succeed in, modern labour markets. They are often referred to as “21st century skills” and are seen as crucial for helping students keep up with the rapid pace of change and technological advancement in the globalised world. The international framework for 21st century competencies is divided into four main categories, as outlined in a document shared by the university. Those specific skills, or areas of knowledge included in these categories, cover a range of subjects such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration, creativity, digital literacy, and global citizenship. These are presented as follows:

1. Ways of thinking:

1. Creativity and innovation: to strengthen the students’ ability to think outside the box and the ability to put things into practice, despite challenges and resistance.
2. Critical thinking, problem solving, decision making: to teach students the ability to think clearly and rationally when taking a decision or solving a problem, which includes the ability to engage in reflective and independent thinking.
3. Learning to learn, metacognition: to strengthen the students’ ability to pursue and persist in learning, and to organise their learning through effective management of time and information.

2. Ways of working:

1. Communication: to foster communication skills among learning students to teach them how to effectively communicate and exchange information and knowledge.
2. Collaboration (teamwork): to encourage students to work to complete a task and achieve a goal.

3. Tools for working:

1. Information literacy: to acquire skills that allow students to identify, find, evaluate, and use information effectively.
2. Information and communication, technology literacy: to strengthen the students’ ability to safely, responsibly, creatively, and effectively use appropriate technology to communicate, access, collect, manage, integrate, and evaluate information.

4. Living in the world:

1. Citizenship – local and global: to develop in students the capacity to participate positively in society, to influence democratic processes and to make informed and responsible decisions.
2. Life and career: to teach students to adapt to change, manage goals and time, be a self-directed learner, manage projects, work effectively in diverse teams; be flexible and productive, and guide and lead others.
3. Personal and social responsibility: to teach students about cultural awareness and competencies.

Through using this framework, the university is expected to map each of the course learning outcomes and the programme outcomes to these competencies, which are further divided in to 3 sections: (1) cognitive competencies (including competencies on cognitive processes and strategies, knowledge and creativity); (2) interpersonal competencies (including competencies on teamwork and collaboration and leadership); and (3) intrapersonal competencies (including competencies on intellectual openness, work ethic/conscientiousness, and positive core self-evaluation –physical and psychological health, self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and self-reinforcement).

## 6.5 Findings

The research has concluded that the international programmes offered by Lebanese universities are governed by a set of requirements and criteria that must be followed by participating universities to be recognised internationally. These requirements and criteria are outlined in various documents, such as policies on international programmes, which help to guide the overall conduct of internationalisation efforts at these institutions. This suggests that there is a formal structure in place for regulating and standardising the international programmes offered by Lebanese universities, ensuring that they meet the necessary criteria for international recognition. The requirements for international recognition of the programmes offered by Lebanese universities have influenced the development of these institutions' internationalisation policies. These policies are designed to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the universities and to develop strategies for internationalisation, with the goal of successfully implementing international programmes. The university mentioned in the quote (UNI-2) used these requirements as a guide in shaping its internationalisation efforts and policies.

*Training, research, mobility, scholarship programs, joint scientific and cultural projects and Europeans projects such as Erasmus +, Erasmus Mundus, H2020, are the key parts in UL's internationalization strategy.*

While UNI-3 explained that the international programmes identified operating an international office at faculty level, not only on an administrative level:

*Faculties also has partnerships with other universities through the international office or the institution.*

On the other hand, UNI-1 explained that finding the right university or the right programme to partner with under internationalisation was not an easy task and it was considered a challenge and a factor of change, internally as well as externally while creating a brand name for the university:

*We need to be very careful who we choose and whom we work with at the same time trying to put the framework for the benefit of our students because if I ask a student to go to France, it is not the same as a student going to Slovenia, Italy or Turkey.*

International programmes’ policy guidelines, requirements, and criteria serve as the framework for strategies to be adopted within the universities pursuing internationalisation. The following summarises changes, policies and practices for internationalisation adopted by the Lebanese universities included in this study. They adhere to international programmes’ documentation, and this helps directly answer the research question on factors that affect the response of Lebanese private universities to internationalisation and, as well, shed light on the answers to the sub-questions. Through the documentary analysis and responses of the interviewees, the framework was conceptualised and materialised, incorporating policies and strategies on four levels:

1. Programmes that allow students to study abroad are designed to promote student mobility, as well as staff and faculty mobility. These programmes typically encourage students to spend a semester or academic year studying at a foreign institution, where they can learn about different cultures, languages, and ways of life. By participating in study abroad programmes, students can gain a deeper understanding of the world and develop valuable cross-cultural skills and experiences. Universities may adopt a range of strategies to promote student, staff, and faculty mobility through their international programs. These strategies may include:

* Developing cultural awareness: by offering classes and programmes that focus on different cultures, universities can help prepare students for study abroad and promote cultural awareness and understanding.
* Modernising educational technology: by incorporating modern educational technologies, such as online learning platforms, universities can make it easier for students to study abroad and stay connected with their home institutions.
* Encouraging and advocating for staff and student mobility: Universities can encourage administrative staff, faculty, and students to participate in exchange programmes or other forms of international mobility, in order to promote a culture of global engagement and encourage more cross-cultural exchanges.

1. Teaching and research activities at the three universities involved in this research have contributed to the success of these institutions through collaboration in research and changes to programmes, programme reviews, and programme redirection. Collaboration in research can involve working with other researchers, institutions, or organisations to conduct joint research projects or to share resources and expertise. This type of collaboration can help to advance knowledge and understanding in a particular field. Changes to programmes, and associated reviews and reorientation were also used to enhance the quality and relevance of teaching and research activities at these universities. Programme reviews involve evaluating the effectiveness and alignment of a particular programme with the institution's goals and mission. Programme redirection involves making changes to better meet the needs of students or to better address current trends or challenges in the field. The university mentioned in the quote ("UNI-1") has adopted these changes to prepare students and faculty for success in their academic and professional endeavours:

*[We have] students from different faculties, and students from different disciplines so when we had the educational day it was like bringing in all cultures and this helped us a lot to know what culture and acculturation is. This is extremely important for us….. Another pressure is research, we are a growing university much attention needs to be given to research - that's one of the pressures we have.*

1. Student admissions is an important aspect of international programmes offered by universities. This process involves identifying and selecting qualified students who meet the necessary criteria for admission to the programme. Ensuring a timely manner of reporting schedules and updates is also important, as it helps to keep students informed about important deadlines, requirements, and any changes to the programme. By keeping students informed in a timely manner, universities can help to ensure that the admission and enrolment process runs smoothly and efficiently.
2. Training is a key component of international programmes offered by universities. It involves providing students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences necessary to succeed in their chosen fields of study. This can include classroom instruction, laboratory work, field experiences, and other forms of experiential learning. Training may be focused on a particular subject area or may be more general in nature, depending on the goals and objectives of the programme. The expansion and sharing of knowledge and training is an important aspect of international programmes. By sharing knowledge and expertise with students from around the world, universities can help to promote a greater understanding and appreciation of different cultures and ways of life. In addition, by providing students with the opportunity to learn from a diverse range of instructors and peers, universities can help to foster a sense of global citizenship and promote cross-cultural understanding and collaboration.

## 6.6 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a thorough analysis of the documents collected for the research, with a focus on projects and consortiums associated with key activities related to internationalisation during the interviews with university officials. In addition, the chapter discussed the data collection tool used to plan for internationalisation activities and the 21st century framework that served as a basis for internationalising the curriculum. The analysis of these documents allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the internationalisation efforts of the universities under study and the various factors that influence these efforts. By examining the policies, strategies, and programmes implemented by these institutions, common themes and trends related to internationalisation could be identified, as well as any unique approaches or challenges faced by the universities. Overall, the findings of this chapter contribute to a broader understanding of the internationalisation practices of Lebanese universities and the various factors that shape these practices. This understanding can be useful for other universities seeking to implement internationalisation initiatives, as it provides insight into the successes and challenges of these efforts and the various factors that influence them. Additionally, by examining the 21st century framework used as a foundation for internationalising the curriculum, insight was obtained into how this framework can be used to promote global engagement and understanding within the HE context.

# Chapter 7: Semi-Structured interviews

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the semi-structured interviews. The primary purpose of this research method was to explore the experiences of staff in universities that have undertaken any form of internationalisation and explore factors that influence responsiveness to internationalisation. A total of three interviews were carried out with university personnel, including deans and directors of the international relations office, who are involved at various levels in the internationalisation process in the three Lebanese private universities. As in the previous chapter, each university is designated with a letter for confidentiality purposes. The primary data collected from the semi-structured interviews was coded, analysed, and aligned to the research questions, as shown in the tables below, and this helps to determine the rationale for internationalisation in the case study universities and how this affected their operations, which should facilitate diffusion of best practice to other Lebanese universities. Following this introductory section, the chapter is divided into three sections, the coding the collected data (based on aligning research questions and the semi-structured interview questions), the analysis of the coded data and a conclusion.

To gather more detailed information to address the study’s research questions and delve deeply into the topic, seven open-ended questions were created for the interviews to orientate the discussion and explore the experiences of the participants at the case study universities. The remainder of this section describes the link between the research questions and the structured interview questions.

To explore the main research question *What factors affect the response of Lebanese private universities to internationalisation?* sub-questions were created, and semi-structured interview questions were aligned to them. To gather information on the first research question on the relationship between internationalisation and institutional theories, the interviews explored internationalisation policies and goals as practiced in Lebanon in general through participants’ shared experiences of other universities, and whether these were successful or not. The first research question led to the sub-questions on exploring participants’ experiences gained from other HEIs regarding internationalisation policies and goals (presented in Table 7.1 below).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Rationale** | **Research questions** | **Semi-structured interview questions** |
| Economic, socio-cultural, political, and academic | What is the relationship between internationalisation and institutional theory and how it affects responsiveness? | 1. To what extent did you identify internationalisation policies and goals from the experiences of other Lebanese higher education institutions? |

Table 7.1: Rationale and link to the first research question

The second research question led to the sub-questions on understanding the environment, strengths of the HE institution, and planning the internationalisation strategy itself as presented in Table 7.2 below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Rationale** | **Research Question** | **Semi-structured interview question** |
| Economic, socio-cultural, and academic | What are the organisational characteristics of the university that favour internationalisation? | 1. What are the internal and external pressures on the university that influenced the decision to implement internationalisation? 2. How was the process of internationalisation planned and what areas of university activities were identified as key parts of internationalisation? 3. How was the process of internationalisation managed? Who were the key leaders and/or the change agents driving the process? Did they exist within the institution or were they recruited to the university to adapt to internationalisation? At what levels of the organisation do they sit? |

Table 7.2: Rationale and link to the second research question

For the third research question that explores stakeholders’ perceptions of internationalisation, the semi-structured interview covered two questions on perceptions and resistance of stakeholders to implementing change as presented in Table 7.3 below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Rationale** | **Research Question** | **Semi-structured interview questions** |
| Economic, socio-cultural, and academic. | What is the association between the university stakeholders’ perceptions of internationalisation and their responsiveness to its implementation | 1. What are the university stakeholders ‘perceptions of internationalisation, and has it affected the university’s responsiveness to its implementation? 2. Has there been resistance to any aspects of internationalisation? And if so, from which stakeholders? |

Table 7.3: Rationale and link of the third research question

The last research sub-question covered student enrolment flow that discloses implementation evaluation procedures as presented in Table 7.4 below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Rationale** | **Research Question** | **Semi-structured interview question** |
| Economic, socio-cultural, and academic. | What is the link between internationalisation and student enrolment? | 1. What is your assessment of the university’s internationalisation process? Which areas have been successful, and which have been less successful? And why? |

Table 7.4: Rationale and link of the fourth research question

After categorising the questions above, nine themes were identified for from the interview data collected. This chapter will detail them one by one.

1. Internal pressures that influence the decision to implement internationalisation.

2. External pressures that influence the decision to implement internationalisation.

3. Planning the internationalisation process.

4. Key activities in internationalisation.

5. Key leaders and change agents involved in the internationalisation process.

6. University stakeholders’ perceptions of the internationalisation process.

7. Resistance from stakeholders to aspects of internationalisation.

8. Successful areas of internationalisation.

9. Experiences of other Lebanese HEIs.

Interviews are one method of qualitative data collection, and the abductive method adopted in this research proved to be most valuable, pointing out the conditions under which the interviews were carried out, namely the pandemic restrictions of 2020 and 2021. Under the abductive method, inductive and deductive analysis is utilised. The inductive method allows the researcher to make sense of the participants’ individual stories which were discussed in detail during the interviews. A narrative analysis will be used to make sense of the individual interviews to highlight the important aspects mentioned and which resonate directly with the research questions. The deductive analysis method also utilised in this research requires a clearly structured approach, visible in the set of questions predetermined for the interviews and to facilitate the mapping and tabulation of the data. Although the interviews were smi-structured, two out of the three interviewees limited their answers to the questions sent, and did not contribute detailed information on the internationalisation process their universities have adopted.

The themes identified are key to the research, constructed through deductive analysis. Data are then fine-tuned and analysed utilising the inductive method of analysis, an approach where detailed reading of the data collected aims to derive concepts and to create a model through analysis and interpretation of the data collected. In addition to the interview transcripts, the notes taken during the interviews are included in this analysis. What is worth mentioning here as well is that the researcher monitored bias meticulously. The number of interviews was not as anticipated, and the researcher sought to avoid jeopardising the validity of the data collected. The common bias among all three universities is that the interviewees mentioned the internationalisation process was successful. However, another valid note is two out of the three interviewees did not detail the internationalisation process strategy before its implementation.

## 7.2 Coding of the qualitative data

### 7.2.1 Deductive coding

Tabulating the data collected from the interviews followed deductive coding, which is an approach that derives codes according to predetermined scores, formed from the directive questions of the interviews that cover all the themes core to the research. The coding is presented in Table 7.5 (below). Each theme is given a score from 1-10: 1 being either not mentioned or of insignificant importance to the interviewee; 2-5 indicates a level of average importance to the interviewee; 6-9 is a level of high importance to the interviewee; and 10 is of utmost importance.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Theme** | **Features** | **UNI-1** | **UNI-2** | **UNI-3** | **Total** |
| **Internal pressures** | Exchange of knowledge and skills among university instructors | 2 | 3 | 9 | 14 |
| Expanding university’s research | 10 | 7 | 6 | 22 |
| Improve the university’s competitiveness | 6 | 5 | 9 | 20 |
| Improve student and faculty mobility | 9 | 10 | 10 | 29 |
| Double degree | 4 | 8 | 5 | 17 |
| International partnerships and cooperation agreements | 1 | 9 | 1 | 11 |
| **External pressures** | Seeking international accreditation | 1 | 9 | 10 | 20 |
| Involvement in consortiums on internationalisation and internationalisation-related project | 8 | 8 | 9 | 25 |
| **Planning** | Data collection tool – institutional self-evaluation tool for internationalisation and internationalisation at home | 10 | 5 | 3 | 18 |
| The international relations office | 9 | 9 | 9 | 27 |
| Collaboration between faculty members from different universities | 4 | 5 | 9 | 18 |
| **Key activities** | Development of language courses and at various levels | 10 | 4 | 4 | 18 |
| Development of culture days | 9 | 4 | 1 | 14 |
| Awareness on mobility culture among students | 10 | 7 | 7 | 24 |
| Mobility of administrative staff | 9 | 9 | 1 | 19 |
| Internationalisation of the curriculum | 10 | 9 | 8 | 27 |
| Training | 1 | 10 | 1 | 12 |
| Research | 1 | 9 | 1 | 11 |
| Scholarship programmes | 1 | 8 | 1 | 10 |
| Joint scientific programmes | 1 | 8 | 1 | 10 |
| Cultural projects | 1 | 8 | 1 | 10 |
| Participation in consortiums projects | 8 | 9 | 8 | 25 |
| **Key leaders and change agents** | International relations office | 10 | 10 | 10 | 30 |
| Faculties and departments (including academic staff and Deans) | 10 | 10 | 10 | 30 |
| Policy advisor | 9 | 4 | 1 | 14 |
| Member of administrative council | 9 | 1 | 1 | 11 |
| Member of scientific Council | 9 | 1 | 1 | 11 |
| Quality assurance council | 9 | 1 | 1 | 11 |
| All leaders and change agents are from within the university | 10 | 10 | 10 | 30 |
| **Stakeholder perceptions of internationa-lisation** | Director and dean focus on teaching and learning | 9 | 6 | 6 | 21 |
| Academic staff focus on research | 9 | 6 | 6 | 21 |
| Positive change | 10 | 10 | 10 | 30 |
| Students and parents focus on collaboration with outside universities | 5 | 5 | 9 | 19 |
| Minimal resistance from various stakeholders | 10 | 5 | 10 | 25 |
| **Reasons for Resistance** | Lack of financial incentive | 9 | 1 | 1 | 11 |
| Lack of power | 10 | 5 | 5 | 20 |
| Overwhelmed staff and increased workload | 9 | 5 | 5 | 19 |
| Fear of revealing weakness in programmes/offices | 1 | 1 | 9 | 11 |
| **Successful areas** | Double degree agreements | 1 | 10 | 10 | 21 |
| Joint supervision doctoral programmes | 1 | 10 | 1 | 12 |
| Implementation of international programmes | 7 | 10 | 7 | 24 |
| Strengthening academic and entrepreneurial relationships | 5 | 10 | 5 | 20 |
| Student and staff mobility | 10 | 10 | 10 | 30 |
| Research | 10 | 7 | 10 | 27 |
| Workshop for teachers | 8 | 5 | 8 | 21 |
| Teaching and learning | 9 | 5 | 8 | 22 |
| **Experiences from other Lebanese HEIs** | The credit system | 10 | 5 | 5 | 20 |
| Implementation of internationalisation | 10 | 8 | 8 | 26 |
| Internationalisation policy | 10 | 5 | 5 | 20 |
| Priorities in the internationalisation process | 10 | 1 | 1 | 12 |
| Façade of internationalisation | 1 | 1 | 10 | 12 |

Table 7.5: Coded tabulation for the Lebanese Universities’ drivers for Internationalisation

## 7.3 Analysis of the data collected

The analysis of the data collected follows: the strategic planning process, which includes understanding the environment; setting the policies and aligning them to the institutions capacities; implementation of the strategy; and lastly, the evaluation and monitoring of the strategic implementation as discussed in chapter 4. However, data analysis will also explore the rationale for internationalisation, and will evaluate the capacity of the case study universities accordingly. As mentioned in chapter 2, the rationales adopted for internationalisation are four: economic, socio-cultural, political, and academic.

### 7.3.1 Detailed analysis of the semi-structured interview questions

Analysis of the internal and external pressures that influence the decision to implement internationalisation in any one HEI explores how various features of HE institutions come to work towards internationalisation, as detailed by the interviewees. Internal pressures influencing the decision to implement internationalisation is related to the first research question on the characteristics of universities that favour internationalisation. Lebanese universities focused on the academic prowess that has built their brand names in Lebanon. The academic rationale was the most prominent in all answers, where all participants from the three universities pointed to expanding research, improving educational competitiveness, improving student and faculty mobility, and having joint or double degrees. When answering the question related to the internal pressures that influence the decision to implement internationalisation, all three participants cited that improvement of student and faculty mobility is a main internal factor that drives their decisions to implement internationalisation. As noted by one of the participants:

*One of the issues that we significantly considered was how big the impact of mobility on students is. This is something that my university lacked before we started implementing various internationalisation-related activities, and we did not have an office at that time to know how mobility works and how mobility should be done as we serve our students. So, this is an example of the internal pressures that drove our decision to implement [UN1].*

All interviewees detailed their procedures to advance education and improve student and faculty mobility. Uni-2 cited:

*It is exciting to explain mobility to students, their families, and our faculty. Mobility in its essence means traveling and immersing in a new culture. We, the Lebanese, have always been known to adapt well to other cultures, be very hospitable, and able to interact with foreigners. The smooth acceptance of mobility within Lebanese society comes easy to us, and is well in demand, especially in this time of Lebanon’s evolution after the years of the Civil War. We have had several students ask us to offer them an opportunity to study abroad.*

Uni-3 also expressed a similar thought on staff and student mobility:

*While planning for internationalisation, we considered meeting the needs of the students to study abroad. To facilitate mobility, we considered offshore programmes, their relevance to society’s needs, and altered requirements of hiring for the new positions.*

Scores on Theme 1 are summarised in Table 7.5.1 below:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Theme** | **Features** | **UNI-1** | **UNI-2** | **UNI-3** | **Total** |
| **Internal pressures** | Exchange of knowledge and skills among university instructors | 2 | 3 | 9 | 14 |
| Expanding the university’s research | 10 | 7 | 6 | 22 |
| Improve the university’s competitiveness | 6 | 5 | 9 | 20 |
| Improve student and faculty mobility | 9 | 10 | 10 | 29 |
| Double degree | 4 | 8 | 5 | 17 |
| International partnerships and cooperation agreements | 1 | 9 | 1 | 11 |

Table 7.5.1: Coded tabulation for the Lebanese Universities’ drivers for Internationalisation-Theme 1

Reading the final scores of internal pressures, a notable discrepancy is observed. This discrepancy relates to the interviewees considering different factors to be of different importance, thus highlighting differentiated perspectives on the implementation of internationalisation. Improving student and faculty mobility had the highest score in all three universities and expanding on the university’s research proved to be another focal point for the case study universities. Both features are academically important to shape the persona of the university. However, only one university cited that expanding its research was of utmost importance.

While other functions were not weighted the same among the three universities. One university had double degrees as an internal factor that drives internationalisation. However, improving competitiveness was the focal point of another university, and exchanging knowledge and skills among university instructors was the focal point of the third university. What is worth noting here is that the joint/double degree was not a powerful drive for internationalisation. The feature of international partnerships did not carry high importance in two of the universities, but the third university interviewed cited that it is a major factor, relied on it and of high importance. The case study Lebanese universities relied on their departments’ internal strength and work to implement internationalisation. Universities appear committed to align their internationalisation process with their internal resource pool, following a resource-based view on the process of internationalisation.

Scores on Theme 2 are summarised in Table 7.5.2 below:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Theme** | **Features** | **UNI-1** | **UNI-2** | **UNI-3** | **Total** |
| **External Pressures** | Seeking international accreditation | 4 | 9 | 10 | 23 |
| Involvement in consortium on internationalisation and Internationalisation-related project | 8 | 8 | 9 | 25 |

Table 7.5.2: Coded tabulation for the Lebanese Universities’ drivers for Internationalisation-Theme 2

External pressures on universities are also related to the research question on the characteristics of the universities favouring internationalisation. When the participants were asked about the external pressures that influenced the decision to implement internationalisation, the need for international accreditation was one main factor cited in two universities. The third university considered international accreditation to be of importance but did not give it as much weight. Another factor, almost unanimously common among all participants, was the participation of the universities in consortiums and/or projects that promote the internationalisation as outlined in the previous chapters. In fact, all participants mentioned the importance of these projects/consortiums in shaping their decision to implement internationalisation. Universities favoured connecting with international bodies through consortiums and joint projects. Such projects are a main driver of going international. As UNI-2 explained:

*Scholarship programmes, joint scientific and cultural projects and Europeans projects such as Erasmus +, Erasmus Mundus, H2020, are the key parts in UL's internationalisation strategy.*

UNI-1 also added detail to this:

*UNI MED Universities of Mediterranean has started a consortium on internationalisation through a data collection tool starting from Lebanon all the way to Mauritania - every Arab country that includes five universities between private and public* [sectors], *all with no exception. We were involved from Lebanon and we are also involved in Mauritania, so we were focus leaders in Mauritania and the Lebanese University here in Lebanon. Parallel to that we had another project with a Slovenian consortium of 17 universities on Mediterranean to internationalise at home…*

Scores on Theme 3 are summarised in Table 7.5.3 below:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Theme** | **Features** | **UNI-1** | **UNI-2** | **UNI-3** | **Total** |
| **Planning** | Data collection tool – institutional self-evaluation tool for internationalisation and internationalisation at home | 10 | 5 | 3 | 18 |
| The international relations office | 9 | 9 | 9 | 27 |
| Collaboration between faculty members from different universities | 4 | 5 | 9 | 18 |

Table 7.5.3: Coded tabulation for the Lebanese Universities’ drivers for Internationalisation-Theme 3

Launching an international relations office in a Lebanese university is another major driver for internationalisation in all three universities under study. Planning for internationalisation is also related to the research question on the characteristics of the universities that favour internationalisation. Under the planning feature, all three universities gave the same weight to an international relations office as an important factor for internationalisation. Two participants stated that the international relations office was responsible for planning and carrying out internationalisation activities. In addition, one participant mentioned that the planning of the internationalisation processes is not only at the level of the international relations office, but also at the level of the faculties and departments. For example, contacts and collaborations between faculty members from different universities could lead to the initiation and planning of internationalisation activities. As one of the participants stated:

*The international relations office manages the internationalisation process in consultation with the different faculties and departments. In fact, the international relations office established several cooperation agreements in consultation with the faculties, for the implementation of mobility projects, or academic programmes, because the collective work is required for the implementation of such projects or programmes [UN2].*

When the participants were asked to elaborate on how the process of internationalisation was planned, one participant cited using an institutional self-evaluation tool for internationalisation to plan the policies and activities to be carried out during the internationalisation process. The content of the self-evaluation tool is detailed in Chapter 6. In fact, the participant mentioned various challenges faced when answering this self-evaluation tool, specifically given the lack of data on universities that have gone through internationalisation in the region. As the participant added:

*We had a tool … of 68 questions, [which allowed us to] organize the internationalisation process of the university. 65 questions that entails the data tools of internationalisation and that was a headache, not easy to answer. There's not much data of universities that go through internationalisation, and the specific framework that you have to go through. The tool is absolutely beautiful and has significantly helped the university plan its internationalisation process. We also had to look also at issues of legal status, the legalisation of the process because internationalisation talks about online degrees [UN1].*

While collaboration between faculty members from different universities and data collection did not attain the same general weights, both concepts scored highly for one university. One participant shared the university’s experiences and challenges when planning for the process of internationalisation:

*Let me tell you how this works, you have the policy, pen and paper, very easy and theoretical. If I remember correctly, we moved from (1) policy (2) student mobility (3) teaching and staff and then the educational programmes. In the programmes, we needed to know exactly how much of these had agreements or how many of these had dual degrees or how much of these had the transfer of credits between here and other countries. The most important and hardest to handle were the programmes of internationalisation because it involved the dual programs and international projects and acquiring legal status. This is something that created a lot of obstacles and at the same time, it's your programme and it must be well organised and well defined with its purpose to meet the programmes of the university. We had to do a lot of adaptation - accommodation and modification - accommodation means we stayed with the objectives, but we minimised the activities, while modification meant we had simple objectives [UN1].*

Scores on Theme 4 are summarised in Table 7.5.4 below:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Theme** | **Features** | **UNI-1** | **UNI-2** | **UNI-3** | **Total** |
| **Key Activities** | Development of culture days | 9 | 4 | 1 | 14 |
|  | Awareness on mobility culture among students | 10 | 7 | 7 | 24 |
| Mobility of administrative staff | 9 | 9 | 1 | 19 |
| Internationalisation of the curriculum | 10 | 9 | 8 | 27 |
| Training | 1 | 10 | 1 | 12 |
| Research | 1 | 9 | 1 | 11 |
| Scholarship programmes | 1 | 8 | 1 | 10 |
| Joint scientific programmes | 1 | 8 | 1 | 10 |
| Cultural projects | 1 | 8 | 1 | 10 |
| Participation in consortiums projects | 8 | 9 | 8 | 25 |

Table 7.5.4: Coded tabulation for the Lebanese Universities’ drivers for Internationalisation-Theme 4

Extending the exploration of the case universities’ characteristics and strengths, to align with the first research question, the interviews also focused on the key activities of the universities. The responses to the question about the areas of university activities that were identified as key parts of internationalisation varied greatly between universities. Key activities recognised as strongest indicators of internationalisation in this study were the internationalisation of the curriculum, adopted by all three universities in the study, where the universities had to revise all programme outcomes and map them against international programme outcomes. One university mentioned mapping their curriculum against the 21st century competencies framework in the School of Education, which is discussed in detail in chapter 6. As the participant noted:

*To put it into implementation, every school now is revisiting its programme outcomes and then the learning outcomes of each course to be mapped against the programme outcomes. I just finished yesterday mapping all the graduate and undergraduate courses and we've been doing that for three months. We finished them completely and will be starting them in spring because this is part of the internationalisation, and we want to see when we do our assessment what exactly are we doing [UN1].*

A second participant explained that the key activity was the development of language courses other than English, such as Spanish, Italian, German, Portuguese, and others. In addition, these language courses need to have at least 2 levels, not just basic courses. The participant from UNI-2 stated:

*We have been working on our curriculum, broadening its scope, and introducing new majors for two planning cycles before we attempted to internationalise. Internationalisation of the university was included in our long-term strategy, and we made sure that the university was up to bar before we even started. Not only the English language courses curriculum was revisited, but other living languages curricula were developed and offered basic and advanced training for students who wish to specialise using those languages, and to provide training to the instructors, as well, in the best ways to teach those languages to others.*

Comparatively speaking, participation in consortiums and projects scored the same weight for two of the universities while the third university adopted internationalisation of the curriculum and awareness on mobility culture among its students, the third indicator of importance in this theme. Awareness of mobility culture entailed providing awareness to students who may be involved in exchange programmes regarding the process of adaptation to different cultures. As one participant mentioned, educational day at the university was established to expose students to various cultures, as stated:

*That is if those people [students] are flying out [they should learn] how they should adapt to a different culture. These are what we were good at: we had something called educational day at the University, we established that in the School of Education and you know the education is a department that involves interdisciplinary students with all different faculties, different students from different disciplines. So, when we had educational day, it was like bringing in all cultures and this helped us a lot to know what culture and acculturation is. This is extremely important for us [UNI-1].*

All interviewees discussed participation in projects related to internationalisation, such as Erasmus + and MED2Iah, as key activities that propelled the university’s internationalisation strategy. Please refer to Chapter 6 for details on these projects. Two universities considered mobility of the administrative staff to be of importance for internationalisation, while the third university depreciated its importance. UNI-2 noted:

*When students travel abroad, their first contact is not with a professor, nor peers. Their first contact is with an administrative staff member. Our administrative staff members, at home, should experience mobility, so as to comprehend how intricate it is to manage, plan and interact with students of mobility. They are the front line of the university and need to have the set of interpersonal and intercultural skills. [UNI-2]*

Only one university adopted cultural projects, joint scientific programmes, training, and research to be valid indicators of internationalisation. The interviewee from Uni-2 explained the university’s perspective by saying:

*Research indicators show an increased interest in internationalisation, and mobility is expanding in countries other than Europe. China and India are having higher statistics in the programme, and we have had a share of their participation through their Embassies in cultural days that included some interactive activities. [UNI-2]*

Scores on Theme 5 are summarised in Table 7.5.5 below:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Theme** | **Features** | **UNI-1** | **UNI-2** | **UNI-3** | **Total** |
| **Key leaders and change agents** | Faculties and departments (including academic staff and deans) | 10 | 10 | 10 | 30 |
| Policy advisor | 9 | 4 | 1 | 14 |
| Member of administrative council | 9 | 1 | 1 | 11 |
| Member of scientific Council | 9 | 1 | 1 | 11 |
| Quality assurance council | 9 | 1 | 1 | 11 |
| All leaders and change agents are from within the university | 10 | 10 | 10 | 30 |

Table 7.5.5: Coded tabulation for the Lebanese Universities’ drivers for Internationalisation-Theme 5

Leadership, key leaders and change agents are an integral constituent of the characteristics of any one institution to drive change. When asked who the key leaders were and/or the change agents driving the process of internationalisation within their universities, all three participants cited the international relations office and the faculties and departments (including academic staff and deans) as the main agents involved in the process. The interviewees from the case universities were in solid agreement on establishing an international relations office, faculties and departments and having internal leaders and change agents as strong indicators of internationalisation. One university adopted a policy advisor. Additionally, one participant described a group of individuals who are considered essential when it comes to the committee that is working on the internationalisation process, this group includes the policy advisor, a member of administrative council, a member of scientific council, and a member of the quality assurance council. As the interviewee of UNI-1 stated:

*You cannot say what works for you works for other universities. Usually, internationalisation groups within the university should include the director, or member of directorate, or the head of the international office. In my case I am the acting director. You must have a policy advisor and the deans or somebody representing the deans, somebody from the academic faculty, member of administrative council, member from scientific council - not many have that but at least somebody from the quality assurance council. That is a very good group that can work on internationalisation. At this moment, the director, the international office, I am representing the deans, members of the academic and one member of administrative [are all present in our group that is involved in the internationalisation process] [UNI-1].*

Remarkably, all participants indicated that the key leaders and agents involved in the process of internationalisation are from within the universities and they sit at various levels of the institutions, ranging from the front-line staff and employees to deans and directors. At the same time, each university had its own understanding and hierarchy of the leadership of internationalisation. Although one university (UNI-1) gave a comprehensive answer on the leadership contributing to internationalisation of the university, the other two universities did not provide details, but agreed on the delegation of leadership power throughout their correspondent hierarchies.

Scores on Theme 6 are summarised in Table 7.5.6 below:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Theme** | **Features** | **UNI-1** | **UNI-2** | **UNI-3** | **Total** |
| **Stakeholders’ perceptions of internationalis-ation** | Academic staff focus on research | 9 | 6 | 6 | 21 |
| Positive change | 10 | 10 | 10 | 30 |
| Students and parents focus on collaboration with outside universities | 5 | 5 | 9 | 19 |
| Minimal resistance from various stakeholders | 10 | 5 | 10 | 25 |

Table 7.5.6: Coded tabulation for the Lebanese Universities’ drivers for Internationalisation-Theme 6

Stakeholders’ perceptions of internationalisation is a factor for strategic internationalisation aligned with a university’s policies and sound implementation of internationalisation. The semi-structured interviews were used to explore the research question related to the association between the university stakeholder’s perceptions of internationalisation and their responsiveness to its implementation. The sample universities collaborating in this study determined that positive change is of utmost importance with minimal resistance from various stakeholders for the internationalisation process. All participants agreed that most stakeholders involved in the process perceived internationalisation as a positive change and thus played an important role in the expansion of the internationalisation process within the university. As stated by one participant:

*University stakeholders have played a positive role in its expansion, given their mobility to institutions abroad, and the research work they supervise with laboratories abroad [UNI-2].*

Interviewed universities considered academic focus of directors, deans and academic staff on research also of essence, while students’ and parents’ collaboration with outside universities had the least effect on the internationalisation process, suggesting internal implementation of internationalisation to be more important than collaboration with external actors. Further, one participant mentioned that the directors and deans perceived internationalisation as an opportunity to change and improve the teaching and learning activities in the university, while the academic staff focused more on improving research activities. A second participant mentioned that the students and parents, who are also considered stakeholders of universities, focused, and were interested, in collaborations with foreign universities. He cited:

*We, sometimes, have inquiries from families and students themselves on which universities considered best to go to, and whether a specific university in a specific country was included in the internationalisation programme so that they connect with.* [*UNI-3]*

Scores on Theme 7 are summarised in Table 7.5.7 below:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Theme** | **Features** | **UNI-1** | **UNI-2** | **UNI-3** | **Total** |
| **Areas of success** | Double degree agreements | 1 | 10 | 10 | 21 |
| Joint supervision doctoral programmes | 1 | 10 | 1 | 12 |
| Implementation of international programmes | 7 | 10 | 7 | 24 |
| Strengthening academic and entrepreneurial relationships | 5 | 10 | 5 | 20 |
| Student and staff mobility | 10 | 10 | 10 | 30 |
| Research | 10 | 7 | 10 | 27 |
| Workshop for teachers | 8 | 5 | 8 | 21 |
| Teaching and learning | 9 | 5 | 8 | 22 |

Table 7.5.7: Coded tabulation for the Lebanese Universities’ drivers for Internationalisation-Theme 7

Once universities have defined their leadership, change agents and factors of resistance to the change planned, their effective implementation of the internationalisation process should reflect in student enrolments and registrations, which is linked the last research question. The interviewees were asked to assess their respective university’s internationalisation process and highlight success areas and less successful areas. The drivers that were coded from the interviewees answers in this section can be considered under the academic rationale for internationalisation, indicating the desire of universities to be labelled international HEIs as explained by [Knight ( 2015](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/10283153221093126)). However, being labelled as an international HEI is not an ultimate goal on its own, as explained by [De Wit et al. (2015](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/10283153221093126)).

When participants were asked about the areas that have been successful in the internationalisation process, all of them emphasised that student and staff mobility was a successful aspect of internationalisation. In fact, all participants mentioned that the implementation of internationalisation academic activities have encouraged more domestic and international students to join their university programmes. In addition, internationalisation activities have also increased the number of incoming and outgoing international students and staff. Moreover, two participants cited double degree agreements as areas that have been successful as part of the internationalisation processes. Analysing the factors mentioned, the economic rationale for implementing an internationalisation process is apparent. However, what is most noted here is that the economic dimension was not expressed overtly, and none of the participants offered an economic incentive as a driver for internationalisation.

Other areas cited by participants as successful included: (1) joint supervision of doctoral programmes, (2) implementation of international programmes related to the society, gender, human rights, and equality, (3) strengthening academic and entrepreneurial relationships that meet the needs of society, (4) research, (5) workshops for instructors, and (6) teaching and learning. In fact, one participant mentioned that, as part of the internationalisation activities, their instructors were sent abroad to attend workshops and training, which proved to be very beneficial. As the participant stated:

*These were very important experiences, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, where all the instructors who attended these workshops were trained to administer online courses to their students [UNI-3].*

Scores on Theme 8 are summarised in Table 7.5.8 below:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Theme** | **Features** | **UNI-1** | **UNI-2** | **UNI-3** | **Total** |
| **Reasons for Resistance** | Lack of financial incentive | 9 | 1 | 1 | 11 |
| Lack of power | 10 | 5 | 5 | 20 |
| Overwhelmed staff and increased workload | 9 | 5 | 5 | 19 |
| Fear of revealing weakness in programmes/offices | 1 | 1 | 9 | 11 |

Table 7.5.8: Coded tabulation for the Lebanese Universities’ drivers for Internationalisation-Theme 8

Naturally, when discussing any change agent, or leadership, resistance to change follows. The semi-structured interview highlighted resistance to change, and participants from the case universities explained their perspective on the reasons for resistance. Interestingly, when asked if there had been any resistance from the stakeholders to any aspects of internationalisation, one participant stated that they had yet to face any resistance, while another stated that resistance was minimal. The latter explained that resistance to internationalisation is minimal because internationalisation has led to long-term growth for the university and students. Internationalisation generates revenue from international students and creates wide-scope opportunities for students in both the short term and long-term. However, this participant stated that resistance originated from various stakeholders due to (1) a lack of financial incentives, and (2) overwhelmed staff, with concerns over increased workload during the internationalisation activities. The third participant mentioned that some programmes/offices resisted efforts towards the internationalisation process because of fear of revealing weakness or flaws when audited or reviewed by an international committee. Plus, one participant explicitly mentioned that some individuals involved in the internationalisation process can resist the change or implementation of any project if the person in charge of the activities is not someone who is highly ranked and has power. As stated by the participant:

*The resistance is not direct, but you can tell [when they say] we have a lot of work and we're overwhelmed, we have much more on our plate, unless it comes from the president then people start doing the job [UN1].*

The participants from the other two universities insinuated the same perspective in relation to power relationships and workload:

*The head of the committee enforces the timeline and closely follows up on the staff and faculty during the implementation of the procedures [UNI-2].*

*The staff are given internal training before new tasks of internationalising the university are added to their daily chores. They are well prepared [UNI-3]*

Scores on Theme 9 are summarised in Table 7.5.9 below:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Theme** | **Features** | **UNI-1** | **UNI-2** | **UNI-3** | **Total** |
| **Experiences from other Lebanese HEIs** | The credit system | 10 | 5 | 5 | 20 |
| Implementation of internationalisation | 10 | 8 | 8 | 26 |
| Internationalisation policy | 10 | 5 | 5 | 20 |
| Priorities in the internationalisation process | 10 | 1 | 1 | 12 |
| Façade of internationalisation | 1 | 1 | 10 | 12 |

Table 7.5.9: Coded tabulation for the Lebanese Universities’ drivers for Internationalisation-Theme 9

When asked about the wider Lebanese experience of the internationalisation process, one participant shared that through the UNIMED consortium, they were able to use the experiences of other Lebanese HEIs. As he stated:

*Yes, we are gaining experience from the external consortium meeting we attend every month, where 17 universities meet [UN1].*

He further elaborated that these universities were invited by UNIMED through the consortia, and they found that they had common goals and experiences during the implementation of the 65-question framework, such that they were able to understand each other better and they were able to understand the context of internationalisation. However, every university has its own experience in terms of internationalisation framework, depending on the gaps identified, their strength and weaknesses, available opportunities, policies, and priorities. As he stated:

*In every university they had a gap in one of those 65 elements of framework. For example, I remember one of the themes related to internationalisation is the credit system and you need to know the credit system is common among everyone. The second thing is you also have to look at your strengths and weaknesses. Another thing is internationalisation policy, if you don’t have one, you have to establish a policy. Not every University has a policy to develop, and you need to know who the members of the internationalisation committee are and then you also need to know what your priorities in the internationalisation process are. Do you want to attract students? Or is it on the teaching and learning side? Do you want students to study abroad? Cooperation to teach foreign languages? You want internationalisation only in Lebanon? Or you want partnerships? Or you want an international ranking? International professors? International experience? You see there are many forms of internationalisation that we need to think about to prioritise [UN1].*

On the other hand, another participant mentioned that Lebanese universities’ experiences in the internationalisation processes were not much visited, because internationalisation is only a façade for Lebanese universities. In practice many of them do not have programmes and activities that align with internationalisation processes. The perspective of this participant agrees with a reason for resistance identified by another participant, limiting participation of universities in internationalisation activities due to lack of power and fear of exposure of internal weaknesses. One participant mentioned that the internationalisation policy was of importance to building an internal strategy of internationalisation, being a valid factor that shapes the activities of any institution. A second participant explained that internationalisation of HE is significant for specific growing institutions interested in expanding, “it comes natural to bigger and more established universities”. The third interviewee expressed the same perspective by stating that internationalisation is ‘normative’ and has been included in the university strategic plans.

## 7.4 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the main findings from the semi-structured interviews and related these to the research questions. The main findings on the internationalisation process in the three case study Lebanese universities highlighted the planning process, internal and external pressures on the administration, leadership, collaboration with other universities and successful areas of implementation, the most valued features of internationalisation and opposition from stakeholders to internationalisation. At the institutional level, the adopted rationale is the academic one, not focusing on the economic benefits of internationalisation, nor the political one. Although the socio-cultural rationale was an aspect of implementation in one university, though conducting cultural days, the other two universities were not sufficiently incentivised to pursue the cultural aspect of internationalisation.

Two of the universities interviewed had similar perspectives on features of implementation of internationalisation while the third university had a more thorough understanding of the process, allowing a detailed interpretation of the elements of internationalisation and implementation. However, participants from all three universities depicted an academic rationale for approaching internationalisation using various practices, including having an international relations office as the starting point in driving change, as well as the inclusion of faculties and staff in the process. However, a more thorough use of a policy advisor, members of an administrative council and quality assurance council was given stress in one university, the other two not mentioning these change agents.

The findings of the interviews also identified key activities such as participation in consortiums and projects that aim to promote internationalisation in HEIs, and internationalisation of the curriculum. Internationalisation is not seen as a threat to universities, but a challenge to be addressed with the proper policies and faculty, although experiences are not uniform. With the expanding competition between HEIs around the world, the Lebanese universities did not see themselves strongly competing in student recruitment, or to having a higher share of the market, on the contrary, they were performing independently from each other, the market is still young allowing them to do so. Naturally speaking, if institutions are not competing in any field, then they should be collaborating, but the research suggests Lebanese HEI are not collaborating yet. The Lebanese universities each have their own model of internationalisation processes, and their plans have been drawn according to their inner strengths and resources availability. The following chapter will analyse the findings of both the documentary analysis and the semi-structured interviews by identifying common themes in the semi-structured interviews that identify models of internationalisation in the Lebanese universities.

# Chapter 8: Contributions of the Thesis

This chapter will be divided into three sections. The first section will evaluate the key findings related to the factors that influence the internationalisation responsiveness of higher education institutions in Lebanon. These findings will be based on the analysis conducted in Chapters 6 and 7 and will provide a detailed understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by these institutions. The second section will state the contributions of the research to knowledge and practice. This section will explore the contributions of this research to the existing literature on internationalisation in higher education and to the practice of internationalisation in Lebanon. It will consider the implications of the findings for policymakers, educators, and researchers and will suggest ways in which the findings may be used to inform the development of strategies for promoting internationalisation in higher education. The third and the final section of this chapter will be the conclusion. This section will provide a summary of the key findings of the research and will consider the implications of these findings for the internationalisation of higher education in Lebanon. It will also reflect on the limitations of the study and the areas where further research is needed.

## 8.1 Lebanese Universities’ internationalisation model

Internationalisation is a relatively new field in HE in Lebanon (AUB, 2019) and it is still in its early stages. In addition, the Lebanese government is still looking into how universities can transit to internationalisation, and the process of setting clearer policies that address the organisation and development of the international dimension of HE (Government of Lebanon, 2019) is still ongoing. However, various forms of internationalisation are being developed in individual universities. Internationalisation is a process planned and implemented on an institutional level. This study has researched Lebanese universities’ models of internationalisation and the factors that affect it with the research questions discussed in chapter 1. From analysing the semi-structured interviews and the documents gathered as the primary data on the universities, the findings show that internationalisation in Lebanese universities does not have a specified common model, but each university has a different set of criteria that the internationalisation process is built upon. However, the analysis of the data has acknowledged several themes that are common across all universities surveyed. Categorising those themes according to their inter-relatedness to one another, they were listed under four broad main factors that affect the responsiveness to internationalisation, as experienced by the universities under research. The four broad factors are:

* Internal and external organisational factors that affect the internationalisation process in each individual university.
* Perceptions of stakeholders and opposition toward internationalisation of the university.
* Recognition of key internationalisation activities.
* Organisational characteristics of the universities that favour internationalisation.

Each of the factors above is derived from findings identified by the interviewees from the case study universities. This is developed in Figure 8.1 (below) to initiate a model of internationalisation in Lebanese universities, with each broad factor associated with themes identified in the semi-structured interviews and grouped according to their encodings. These themes were not only shared across the three case study universities and were evaluated as important in all three universities, earning at least a 50% weighting in the encoding process.

Figure 8.1: Factors affecting Lebanese Universities Internationalisation Responsiveness Model

It is notable that the participants did not mention recruiting international student and staff, a significant source of revenue for universities, and likewise, revenue generation was not mentioned by all interviewed parties as a significant factor of internationalisation as well. However, universities are keen on the mobility of local staff and students who are well prepared for an international mobility through language courses and internationalisation of the faculties and departments. The process of internationalisation is an important issue for HEIs seeking to expand their reach and influence on a global scale. This research identifies key activities that are commonly pursued by universities in their efforts to internationalise. These activities include forming partnerships with well-established international programmes at universities outside of the region, creating connections with these institutions, and following their models in terms of education and curriculum. Through the analysis of secondary data collected in this research, it was found that all three universities under study had connected with European programmes and were complying with their agreements for internationalising the curriculum, promoting mobility culture among students, training staff and faculty, participating in consortiums, and offering language courses. These actions demonstrate a strong desire to modernise and become more closely connected to foreign models of education, with the ultimate goal of achieving a higher degree of internationalisation.

As HEIs from around the world come together and form international partnerships and collaborate with each other, there is an opportunity for internationalisation to take place (Hill et al., 2014) which offers a competitive advantage for universities in the HE sector, as well as offering an opportunity to expand operations and widen the potential market for students. In addition, there are opportunities to expand the knowledge of staff, teachers, and students (Sutherland et al., 2020). The internationalisation of universities presents opportunities for a higher standard of education to a wide sector of Lebanese students through development of curriculum, course programmes, and teacher and staff training. It is well noted that conducting research and promoting research development is an essential aspect of the internationalisation process for HEIs in Lebanon. This is because engaging in research allows universities to stay up-to-date with the latest theories and practices in their fields of study, to build their reputation and visibility on the global stage, and to foster collaboration with international partners. Participating in consortiums and international conferences is a common way for universities to engage in research and to share their findings with others. By participating in these types of activities, universities in Lebanon can strengthen their research capabilities, increase their competitiveness, and enhance their standing in the global higher education community.

## 8.2 The overall contribution of the research

Institutional theory is defined basically as the ‘rules of the game’ played by society such as economic systems or social norms, affecting the behaviour, beliefs, interaction, and interpretations of organisations. In this research, institutional theory is most applicable since the research explores the factors affect decisions in three separate universities in Lebanon. Institutional theory is particularly applicable to this research study because it allows for the examination of a wide range of factors that may influence decision-making at these universities. These factors include the broader economic and political context in which the universities operate, the cultural and social norms that shape their behaviour, and the expectations and demands of various stakeholders such as students, faculty, and government officials. By analysing how these factors interact and influence decision-making at the universities, this research aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics at play within higher education institutions. This understanding can be used to inform the development of strategies for addressing the challenges and opportunities faced by these institutions and for improving their performance and impact.

Additionally, by examining three separate higher education institutions, this study provides a more robust and diverse perspective on the role of institutional forces in the decision-making processes of these institutions. The research undertaken focused on each case university separately, analysing and highlighting the framework of behaviours, factors, decisions, perceptions, and implementation of internationalisation in each institution, then finding the common factors, whether formal or informal, that have affected the internationalisation decisions. Thus, the findings of this research into internationalisation frameworks are based on the institutional theory that builds a direct connection between the beliefs and practices of a society with processes that are accepted as conventional or common practices.

In Lebanon, the private higher education system is complex and differs from one institution to another. In addition, the country lacks clear national policies to organise the international dimensions of higher education. Furthermore, literature and data on internationalisation activities and strategies in Lebanese universities are very limited. Such conditions necessitate the undertaking of further studies, similar to this one, which aim to fill the research gap on internationalisation practices in the private universities in Lebanon. This study has, however, produced important insights into the internationalisation processes in Lebanese higher education in general, and specifically in three Lebanese universities. HEIs in Lebanon, like those in other parts of the world, are constantly facing competition in terms of their national and international standing. To remain competitive and maintain their reputation, it is essential that these institutions adopt international dimensions and incorporate internationalisation processes and activities into their operations. By doing so, they can keep up with the global market and ensure that they are offering the best possible education and research opportunities to their students and faculty.

Some of the ways in which HEIs in Lebanon may incorporate international dimensions into their operations include partnering with international programmes and institutions, adopting international curricula and standards, promoting a mobility culture among students and faculty, and participating in international consortiums and research collaborations. By engaging in these activities, HEIs in Lebanon can build their reputation and credibility on a global scale, attract top talent and funding from around the world, and contribute to the overall development of their country.

The current research investigates the factors that influence the implementation of internationalisation processes. The rationale for undertaking this research in Lebanon, is the dearth of literature on internationalisation practices in Lebanon, where internationalisation strategies and factors that influence the implementation of internationalisation are not well researched and documented. Therefore, this study aimed to fill the identified research gap on internationalisation practices in the Lebanese HEIs. In doing this, the research makes theoretical and empirical contribution to the existing body of literature on factors that influence internationalisation practices in HEIs. To the knowledge of the researcher, this is the first attempt to explore the factors that influence the implementation of internationalisation in Lebanese private universities, with a focus on institutional and organisational factors, as well as stakeholders’ perceptions.

### 8.2.1 Contribution to knowledge

This research contributes to knowledge by advancing the understanding of the institutional and organisational factors that might facilitate or hinder the implementation of, and responsiveness to, internationalisation processes in HE in general; as well as tackling a specific gap in the literature concerned with internationalisation in the Lebanese HE context. The theoretical contribution of this current study is made by demonstrating the utility of both institutional theory and diffusion of innovation theory as frameworks for collecting and analysing data in relation to internationalisation. Institutional theory indicates that HEIs are organisations that are affected by the environment they operate in, and that environment strongly shape formal structures and units within them. The research has adopted institutional theory, highlighting that the perspective by which the Lebanese society considers internationalisation affects the decisions made by university administrations. To exemplify, the interviewees held shared views and perceptions on several points discussed in their respective interviews, and they demonstrated that it is practice not to discuss the goal of profit in higher education institutions (the economic rationale), highlighting rather the objective of education as a key activity of universities. This approach resonates with the concept institutional logics, introduced by Alford and Friedland (1985), depicting the influence of contradictory practices in modern Western societies on individuals’ political decisions. Friedland and Alford (1991) have described institutional logic as “material practices and symbolic construction” shaping institutional disciplines and “available principles”.

Therefore, the study offers empirical evidence of these theories’ explanatory power. The findings of the study also provided insight into the effects of institutional pressures on responsiveness to internationalisation processes. The research also revealed that the institutional context is distinct in each university and consequently drivers, priorities, responsiveness, and aspirations for internationalisation varied significantly between universities. The study also expanded knowledge on organisational characteristics that favour internationalisation. Leaders, who have managerial or financial power, and who are recruited from within the university were found to be driving the institutional responsiveness to internationalisation. In addition, the international relations office and academic staff were the two main key drivers of the internationalisation process, while incentives and support are two key factors that influence the level of responsiveness to internationalisation. The research findings also revealed that internationalisation was broadly perceived as a positive change among many stakeholders involved in the process (although this perception differed from one participant to the others), and thus they can play a positive role in the implementation of internationalisation strategies.

### 8.2.2 Contribution to practice

The analysis conducted in this study identified internal and external drivers of internationalisation in Lebanese universities, as well as the importance of stakeholders’ perceptions. Similar research could be undertaken to help support other universities identify their internationalisation visions for future implementation. Moreover, this study could be a starting point for further research in other industries of Lebanon, such as hospitality and tourism, or to evaluate internationalisation of HE in other countries. The study also has practical implications. The findings offer pertinent and timely information on internationalisation practices for HEIs, students and their parents, and to governmental organisations. By providing empirically based research on the current state of internationalisation at these institutions, this study can be disseminated to help students and their families understand the opportunities available to them as well as potential challenges. The findings of this research may also be useful in helping students to select a university that best meets their needs and interests. For example, students may use this research to compare the internationalisation practices of different universities and to assess which institutions are closely aligned with their goals and aspirations. In this way, this research can serve as an important tool for supporting informed decision-making about higher education and thereby helping students to achieve their full potential.

The findings of this study can be useful for a range of stakeholders who are interested in understanding the factors that influence the internationalisation process in Lebanese universities. By examining these factors, the study provides insights into how internationalisation is implemented and the challenges and opportunities that are faced by HEIs in Lebanon and other countries as they seek to internationalise. This information can be valuable for policymakers, educators, and researchers who are working to promote the internationalisation of higher education and to support the development of institutions of higher learning. Additionally, by exploring the factors that affect the responsiveness of higher education institutions in Lebanon, this study may provide valuable insights for institutions in other countries that are seeking to adapt to the changing landscape of higher education and to remain competitive in an increasingly globalised world. Overall, the findings of this study can help to shed light on the complex dynamics of internationalisation in higher education and to inform the development of strategies for promoting internationalisation and improving the performance and impact of higher education institutions in the region and beyond.

This study is highly relevant for higher education policy makers in Lebanon, as it has the potential to influence change at the national level. By examining the internationalisation practices of private HEIs in Lebanon, this research provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities facing these institutions and offers recommendations for improving the design of the higher education curriculum in the country. Education policy makers in Lebanon can use the findings of this study to re-examine the current curriculum and consider ways in which it can be adapted to support the internationalisation. This may include the incorporation of new courses and programmes that are more closely aligned with international standards and trends, the promotion of mobility culture among students and faculty, and the development of partnerships with international institutions and programmes.

By identifying best practice and strategies for promoting internationalisation in Lebanon, this research has the potential to support the growth and development of younger higher education institutions and to enhance the overall quality of higher education in the country. The findings of this study suggest that the lack of a clear regulatory framework and policies related to the internationalization of the curriculum has hindered the implementation of internationalization in HEIs in Lebanon. This lack of clear guidance has in all likelihood contributed to the slow adoption of internationalisation practices and has limited the ability of these institutions to fully realise the benefits of internationalisation. To address this issue, it is recommended that the government of Lebanon establish well-defined policies and regulatory frameworks that govern the internationalisation process in the country. By doing so, the government can provide greater clarity and direction for HEIs seeking to internationalise and can help to stimulate the adoption and implementation of internationalisation practices. Such policies and frameworks could include guidelines for building partnerships with international institutions and programmes, standards for curriculum development, and criteria for measuring the success of internationalisation efforts. By providing this guidance and support, the government can help to ensure that HEIs in Lebanon are able to effectively pursue internationalisation and to fully participate in the global higher education community.

#### 8.2.2.1 A call to Higher Education Institutions

Internationalisation has clear benefits to HEIs. The Lebanese universities pursue internationalisation from an academic perspective, looking to internationalise the curriculum and forming offices that overlook the process, specifically to increase student, staff, and faculty mobility. Based on the findings of this study and the recommendations that have been proposed, it is suggested that higher education institutions in Lebanon consider the following issues when they pursue internationalisation:

1. Set clear goals and objectives for internationalisation: defining what the university hopes to achieve through internationalisation efforts will help to guide decision-making and ensure that resources are used effectively.
2. Develop a comprehensive internationalisation plan: a strategic plan that outlines the steps the university will take to achieve its internationalisation goals can help to ensure that all relevant areas are addressed and that resources are allocated appropriately.
3. Build partnerships with international institutions and programs: engaging with international partners can provide access to new knowledge, expertise, and networks, and can help to enhance the university's global reputation.
4. Promote a mobility culture among students and faculty: encouraging students and faculty to study and work abroad can broaden their perspectives and enhance their global competencies.
5. Measure and evaluate the impact of internationalisation efforts: tracking progress and assessing the outcomes of internationalisation efforts can help to identify areas of success and areas for improvement.
6. Foster sociocultural awareness and providing training: HEIs should promote cultural understanding and sensitivity among their community members to support internationalisation efforts and enhance the overall quality of education.
7. Observe social responsibility: HEIs should be mindful of the impact of their actions on local and international communities and should seek to engage in activities that contribute to the common good.
8. Internationalise the curriculum: HEIs should consider ways to incorporate international perspectives and approaches into their curricula to better prepare students for success in a globalised world.
9. Engage in innovative projects: participating in cutting-edge research and development projects can help to build the university's reputation and advance knowledge in its fields of study.
10. Monitor the impact of internationalisation internally and nationally: HEIs should track the outcomes of their internationalisation efforts and assess the impact of these efforts on their own operations and on the broader society.
11. Collaborate with national universities and exchange knowledge: working together and sharing knowledge and expertise with other institutions can support the development of a strong and vibrant higher education sector.
12. Develop strong leadership characteristics: HEIs should ensure that they have capable leaders who are able to support the internationalisation process and access resources and training, as well as engage with the community and advance research.

Accordingly, the internationalisation of the Lebanese universities is a continuous process that most universities are looking forward to. Internationalisation creates the brand name of any institution and provides a competitive edge to their existence.

## 8.3 Conclusion

Internationalisation opens a range of opportunities for HEIs to secure benefits at a university level, among its stakeholders, as well as the national level. This study explored factors that influence internationalisation and its implementation within universities, examining those factors from the universities’ perspective and understanding. The research was focused on developing a framework of internationalisation in Lebanese universities through their current practices. The study adopted institutional theory to analyse the decisions taken by Lebanese HEIs in relation to internationalisation. generating a better understanding of the dynamics of implementing internationalisation. Research in this area has been abundant, but little has been done on the universities in Lebanon, which can be considered ‘start-ups in internationalisation terms. The factors affecting internationalisation decision making, notwithstanding small differences between HEIs, all fall into similar categories, avoiding the for-profit objective of universities.

The research has utilised the institutional theory in a cross-sectional design to build an understanding of the decision-making process of HEIs in Lebanon and noted the similarities identified from the interviews with participants from the three case study universities, from which a framework of internationalisation in the Lebanese HE sector could be developed. This research identified four major factors that shape the policies and effectiveness of internationalisation implementation at Lebanese universities. First are the internal and external factors that influence internationalisation at each university, and which may include the university's mission and goals, its resources and capabilities, the regulatory and policy environment in which it operates, and the broader economic and political context. Second are the stakeholders' perceptions, as the views and expectations of key stakeholders, such as students, faculty, and government officials, can have a significant impact on the internationalisation policies and practices of a university. Third, the key internationalisation activities practiced by the universities, such as building partnerships with international institutions, promoting mobility culture, and developing international curricula, can shape the effectiveness of these efforts. Fourth, the unique organisational characteristics of each university, such as its size, culture, and leadership, can influence the way in which it approaches internationalisation and the success of its efforts. Understanding the interplay of these four factors is crucial for gaining insight into the challenges and opportunities faced by HEIs in Lebanon as they seek to internationalize and for developing strategies to address these issues.

# Chapter 9: Limitations, Proposal for Further Research, and Final Thoughts

## 9.1 Introduction

Higher education institutions in Lebanon are taking various approaches to internationalisation, as they seek to enhance their academic excellence, research productivity, student and faculty mobility, and reputation. However, the lack of clear policies and guidance from the government on how universities should approach this process has posed challenges for these institutions. Without clear direction from the government, universities may struggle to effectively implement internationalisation strategies and to realise the full benefits of these efforts. This lack of guidance may also hinder the development of a cohesive and coordinated approach to internationalisation across the higher education sector in Lebanon, potentially limiting the overall impact and effectiveness of these efforts. To address these issues, it is recommended that the government of Lebanon provide clearer policies and guidance on the internationalisation process to support the efforts of higher education institutions in the country.

Internationalisation is a process that is typically planned and implemented at the institutional level, meaning that each HEI may have its own unique model or approach to internationalisation. This is because the specific goals, resources, and challenges of each university will influence the way in which it pursues internationalisation. As a result, it is likely that different universities will adopt different strategies and activities as part of their internationalisation efforts. Some universities may prioritise building partnerships with international institutions, while others may focus on promoting mobility culture among students and faculty. Still, others may prioritise the development of international curricula or the establishment of research collaborations. The diversity of approaches to internationalisation reflects the fact that each university is unique and faces its own set of challenges and opportunities as it seeks to internationalise. While higher education institutions in Lebanon may take different approaches to internationalisation, it is likely that these approaches fall within a limited scope of activities. This is because the goals and resources of these institutions are likely to be similar and may be constrained by external factors such as the regulatory and policy environment in which they operate. As a result, universities in Lebanon may be limited in the strategies and activities that they are able to pursue as part of their internationalisation efforts. This is evident in the findings of this research, which may show that the approaches taken by the case study universities are relatively similar and fall within a defined range of work.

It is worth noting that internationalisation can take many forms, such as attracting international students, establishing partnerships and collaborations with international institutions, and offering international programmes and study abroad opportunities. Universities in Lebanon are implementing a combination of these strategies as part of their internationalisation efforts. Based on the findings of this research, it is likely that the internationalisation of HEIs in Lebanon is still in its early stages. This may be due to a range of factors, such as the lack of clear policies and guidance from the government, limited resources and capabilities, and a lack of experience and expertise in internationalisation. As a result, there is a need for further development and clarification of policies and approaches to internationalisation to support the efforts of universities in Lebanon to pursue this process. This may involve the establishment of clear goals and objectives for internationalisation, the development of comprehensive strategic plans, the building of partnerships with international institutions, and the promotion of mobility culture among students and faculty. By addressing these issues and providing the necessary resources and support, universities in Lebanon can effectively advance their internationalisation efforts and enhance their standing in the global higher education community.

## 9.2 Limitations of the research

External validity of research refers to the extent to which the findings of a research study can be generalised to other populations or contexts beyond the specific sample and setting of the study. In the context of this research study on the drivers of internationalisation in Lebanese universities, external validity may be a potential limitation displayed in the cultural differences between Lebanon and other countries. Higher education systems and the drivers of internationalisation may vary significantly across different cultural contexts. For example, the motivations for internationalisation may be different in a collectivist culture compared to an individualist culture, or in a country with a strong tradition of higher education compared to a country with a more recent history of higher education. Therefore, the findings of the study may not be directly applicable to universities in other countries with different cultural contexts. Associated with this are the structural differences between Lebanon and other countries. Higher education systems can vary significantly in terms of the size, scope, and funding of universities, as well as the regulatory environment in which they operate. These structural differences may impact the drivers of internationalisation in different ways, and the findings of the study may not be applicable to universities in other countries with different structural contexts.

Another limitation of the research was the lack of previous research studies on the internationalisation of HEIs in Lebanon. Without a foundation of previous research, it can be challenging to contextualise and interpret the findings or compare best practice. However, the research utilised established theories to support the study, to support the research questions and with the aim of developing a framework to evaluate how Lebanese universities have been internationalising their activities.

## 9.3 Proposals for further research

The research was conducted in Lebanon, where the economic and political situation, in addition to the current COVID-19 pandemic, in the country has impacted every aspect of human lives. Thus, it would be beneficial to replicate the research when conditions in Lebanon are back to normal and using a large and representative sample of the Lebanese universities. In addition, longitudinal studies may also be considered as a future research strategy to advance the understanding of internationalisation practices and how identified factors can change and impact the implementation process over time.

It is worthy to note that while HEIs are not naturally inhibited by the institutional environment and concepts, they have other factors that affect decision making and practices. To mention but one, Webber (2021) explained that individual actors in HEIs influence environmental pressures by either adopting or resisting them, affecting institutional entrepreneurship and institutional work. Exploring the framework of internationalisation from institutional perspective focuses the study on the features and factors within universities. Further research in Lebanon is invited to explore challenges that face universities’ entrepreneurship into internationalisation, expanding to consider external factors such as the political environment, communications, and culture. Therefore, calls for more research on HE Internationalisation policies are required at the global and local levels, and at governmental and individual levels in Lebanon.

Additionally, since the specific sample of universities included in the study may impact the generalisability of the findings, further research including a more diverse sample of universities should follow, explicitly discussing the potential impact of cultural and structural differences. By including a wider range of universities in the sample, it is possible to increase the generalisability of the findings to other types of universities and to improve the external validity of the study. This may involve including universities of different sizes, in different locations, and areas of focus, as well as institutions that represent a broad range of disciplines and research interests. By expanding the sample to include a more diverse group of universities, it is possible to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence internationalisation in HE and to identify any common themes or patterns that emerge across different types of institutions. This can help to increase the relevance and usefulness of the findings for policymakers, educators, and researchers.

Another way to address the limitation of relying on a small sample size in research is to use statistical techniques in quantitative research to control for potential confounders and increase the external validity of the findings. For example, multiple regression analysis is a statistical technique that can be used to examine the relationship between a dependent variable (such as internationalisation responsiveness) and independent variables (such as internal and external factors, stakeholders' perceptions, key activities of internationalization, and organizational characteristics). By controlling for these variables, it is possible to isolate the effect of a particular factor on the dependent variable and to draw more robust conclusions about the relationships between these variables. This can help to increase the external validity of the findings and to generalize the results to a larger population.

## 9.4 Final thoughts and conclusions

Internationalisation is an important process for HEIs in Lebanon, as it can help to build and develop international expertise and facilitate the sharing of knowledge and personnel. By engaging in international partnerships and exchanges, universities in Lebanon can access new knowledge, research opportunities, and networks that can enhance their academic and research capabilities. Internationalisation can also provide opportunities for faculty and students to study and work abroad, which can broaden their perspectives and enhance their global competencies. Additionally, by participating in international conferences and other events, universities in Lebanon can increase their visibility and reputation on the global stage and attract top talent from around the world. Overall, internationalisation is an important way for universities in Lebanon to build and develop their expertise and to share their knowledge and resources with others in the global higher education community.

Universities are described as a loosely coupling system that requires a collegial process and executive authority to manage the process of internationalisation. This process should be representative of the culture within which it occurs, and it should involve faculty and student exchange, joint teaching and research programmes, and curriculum internationalisation. Incentives and programs such as seed funding and enhanced international student experiences can facilitate the process. It is essential that current global trends of internationalisation are understood, where an evaluation of the Lebanese universities approach can be measured and compared utilising scientific R&D expenditures and technical publications related to different countries.

Establishing guidelines to measure the extent of international collaborations is a recommendation that can help universities in Lebanon to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their existing processes for internationalisation. These guidelines could include specific metrics or indicators that help to quantify the extent of international collaborations within the university. For example, this could include data on the number of international partnerships, the number of international students or faculty members, the amount of funding received from international sources, or the number of international research projects or publications. By collecting and analysing this data, universities can gain a better understanding of their current level of internationalisation and where they may be excelling or struggling. This information can be used to inform decision-making and strategic planning around internationalisation, and it can help universities to identify areas for improvement or areas where they may be able to build on their existing strengths. Overall, establishing guidelines to measure the extent of international collaborations can be a useful tool for evaluating and optimising the internationalisation efforts of universities in Lebanon.

In conclusion, this qualitative research study has explored the development of a framework for the internationalisation of HEIs in Lebanon. Through in-depth interviews with experts and stakeholders, we identified four factors that influence the internationalisation process: internal and external factors of individual universities; stakeholders’ perceptions; key activities of internationalisation as practiced by the universities; and organisational characteristics of each of the universities. This framework is intended to provide guidance and support for institutions seeking to enhance their internationalisation efforts and build upon their strengths and opportunities. Overall, this research study has contributed to the understanding of the internationalisation of HEIs in Lebanon and will be a useful resource for institutions seeking to enhance their internationalisation efforts. However, it is important to note that the findings of this study are not intended to be prescriptive or exhaustive, and further research is needed to fully understand the complexities and challenges of internationalisation in this context.

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# Appendix 1: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter



# Appendix 2: Recruitment Email

Dear Sir/Madame,

My name is Layal Iskandarani. I am a Doctor of Business Administration student at Staffordshire University.

I am kindly requesting your participation in a research study that I am conducting titled: Factors affecting the responsiveness of Lebanese private universities to internationalisation.

This research aims to explore the trend of internationalisation within the higher education institutions in Lebanon focusing on private universities, and intends to answer the following main research question: What factors affect the response of Lebanese private universities to internationalisation?

The study employs two methods of data collection: (1) documentary analysis and (2) semi-structured interviews. The documentary analysis phases involves the process of reviewing and analysing university documents and extracting relevant information. In this case, the documentary analysis will allow us to identify the various forms of internationalisation that have been implemented in the institution.

The second phase of the study involves conducting interviews with university key personnel that are well informed about the internationalisation processes within their institution; as well as knowledgeable about the organisational and leadership characteristics of the university.

The interview, which will take place virtually using Zoom platform, aims to collect information on the factors that influence the internationalisation processes within universities. Some background information to learn about your role in the university, your experience with internationalisation, and your relationship to the internationalisation process in this university will be collected. The following open-ended questions will be discussed during the interview, in addition to any additional questions that may arise from the documentary analysis and topics/discussions of the interview:

1. What are the internal and external pressures on the university that influenced the decision to implement internationalisation?
2. How was the process of internationalisation planned and what areas of university activities were identified as key parts of internationalisation?
3. To what extent did you identify internationalisation policies and goals from the experiences of other Lebanese higher education institutions?
4. How was the process of internationalisation managed? Who were the key leaders and/or the change agents driving the process? Did they exist within the institution or were they recruited to the university to adapt to internationalisation? At what levels of the organisation do they sit?
5. What are the university stakeholders’ perceptions of internationalisation and has it affected the university’s responsiveness to its implementation?
6. Has there been resistance to any aspects of internationalisation? And if so, from which stakeholders?
7. What is your assessment of the university’s internationalisation process? Which areas have been successful, and which have been less successful? And Why?

Participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the interview at any time. The study is completely anonymous, therefore, the institution’s name, your name and any other identifying information will not be recorded and reported. Prior to the start of the interview, I will use a consent script to inform you about the study objectives and explicitly ask you to provide verbal consent to participate. Your response will be recorded and documented.

Your participation in the research will be of great importance to provide insight regarding the development of best practices around internationalisation in higher education institutions in Lebanese private universities. Furthermore, our research aims to facilitate the implementation of internationalisation in HEIs in Lebanon for future generations by clarifying the initiatives that need to be implemented and obstacles that need to be overcome.

If you to agree to participate in the interview, we kindly request from you to send us all available documents related to the forms of internationalisation that have been implemented within your institution (examples of these document include: (1) data on international student recruitment, (2) data on international research collaboration, (3) documents that show the incorporation of intercultural and international dimensions in the curriculum, teaching, research and extracurricular activities, (4) data on staff mobility - sending faculty members abroad or recruiting foreigners as faculty, academic staff and researchers, (5) data on online learning courses and distance learning, (6) documents on convergence of university credits and degrees to other institutions within or outside the country, (7) documents on the credit transfer schemes allowing students to validate study credits obtained from other institutions within or outside the country). Please note that these documents will be destroyed/deleted once the research project has ended and no identifying data will be extracted from the shared documents.

If you have any further questions, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Layal Iskandarani, Doctor of Business Administration student at Staffordshire University.