



A Study on the Prospects of Career Advancement through Higher Education among the Working Executives in the UAE

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ABSTRACT

Working executives in the UAE have been searching for ways to enhance their career in terms of their status, designation, salary, perks, perquisites, and other fringe benefits. The researcher was interested to know the career advancement benefits that a working executive would get by pursuing higher education in the UAE. Therefore, it had been of utmost importance to study the prospects of career advancement through higher education among the working executives in the UAE. Taking the objectives of the study into account, the researcher followed a descriptive approach using the simple random sampling method. The sample frame of the study comprises those candidates who have completed their higher education program like MBA, MSc, MCom, MCA and MA from universities like IGNOU, SMU and MKU respectively. The study was conducted using both primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected using questionnaire. The major finding was that there is a significant relationship between career advancements and higher education among the working executives in the UAE.

KEYWORDS : Higher education, career advancement, working executives, benefits.

Introduction

The Middle East in general and the UAE in particular continues to be one of the most sought after destinations for high profile job seekers in higher education. As new projects are launched and new ventures are announced both in the private and public sectors, hundreds of job opportunities are reported every day. Earlier it was true that higher education did not play a crucial role in the job market. But now, graduation and training in specialized areas have become minimum criteria for coveted jobs.

The increase in the number of people joining for weekend/evening courses is a pointer to the need of higher education for career advancement. For working professionals, to get promotion or even to sustain in the present employment, higher education or development of skills in specialized areas is fast becoming a necessity.

Education in UAE

The education system through secondary level is monitored by the Ministry of Education in all emirates except Abu Dhabi, where it falls under the authority of the Abu Dhabi Education Council. It consists of primary schools, middle schools and high schools.

Higher Education in UAE

Higher education in the United Arab Emirates is witnessing significant development and progress on both quantitative and qualitative levels. The higher education system is monitored by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MOHESR). It was established by 1992 Federal Law with a view to oversee higher education and scientific research policies in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The flagship of higher education in the United Arab Emirates, United Arab Emirates University, was founded in 1976. Subsequently, the Higher Colleges of Technology was established in 1988, and which presently has seventeen (17) branches at the state level. Later in 1998, Zayed University was instituted having two branches, one in Abu Dhabi and the other in Dubai.

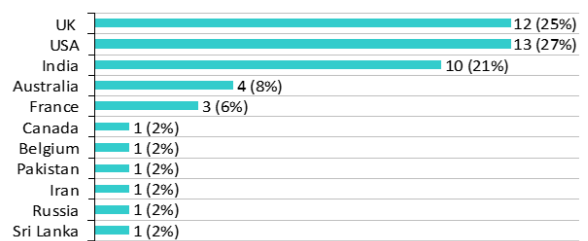
Table No: 1.1
Higher Education Institutions in the UAE in 2011

Type of HEIs	Number of HEIs	Number of Students	% Total Students
Federal	3	36,672	40%
Private - International	49	28,717	32%
Private - Local	44	25,765	28%
Total – All HEIs	96	91,154	100%

Source: Secondary Data

Figure No: 1.1

Country of Origin of International HEIs in 2011



Indian Higher Education in UAE

Indians in the United Arab Emirates constitute the largest part of the population of the country. Almost 21% of Higher Education Institutions in UAE are Indian origin.

Partner Institutions / Learning Centers of Indian Universities

Most of the Indian Universities are offering Higher Education Programs across the UAE through distance education mode. All these Universities are operating with the collaboration of local educational institutions in the UAE called Learning Centers or Partner Institutions. The following are the major Universities and their LCs/PIs in UAE; Indian Higher Education Institutions are operating in UAE through branch campuses or Partner Institutions (PIs) / Learning Centers (Lcs).

Statement of the Problem

Working executives in the UAE have been searching for ways to enhance their career in terms of their status, designation, salary, perks and perquisites, and other fringe benefits. The mushrooming of higher educational institutions in UAE is also on the rise. Therefore, it has been of utmost importance and imperative to study the prospects of career advancement through Higher Education among the working executives in the UAE. Thus, the researcher is interested to know the career advancement benefits that a working executive would get by pursuing higher education in the UAE.

Research Question

What is the relationship between career advancement and higher education of working executives in the UAE?

Objective of the Study

To study the prospects of career advancement through higher education among the working executives in the UAE.

Review of literature:

1. Alison Devine, Regional Manager Education UK, Middle East -. 'TNE in the UAE' (2010) concluded that the UAE has attracted at least

49 international HEIs which currently account for 51% of the total number of HEIs in the country. Employing diverse models of education delivery, they have a 32% share of the total student population enrolled in higher education in the UAE. The UAE is increasing in popularity as an education destination among 'external' (non UAE based) students, especially from Asian and Middle Eastern countries.

2. Aisha S. Al-Harhi, Sultan Qaboos University, Oman(2011) in the article 'Distance Higher Education Experiences of Arab Gulf Students in the United States: A Cultural Perspective' opined the following: This study shows, Arab Gulf students were hardly interested in distance education opportunities available for them in the United States. One reason for individuals' resistance was the vague policy towards it at the governmental level in the Arab Gulf States. If Arab Gulf States were to benefit from distance education, they should deal with the resistance at two levels: individual level and governmental level. At the individual level, it is important to promote distance education to Arab Gulf students by providing a clearer and a more detailed picture of distance education. At the governmental level, if Arab Gulf States do not want to find themselves overwhelmed with global distance western providers, a more proactive approach is required to articulate policies addressing critical issues, such as including equity of access, curriculum relevance to labor market needs, accreditation, consumer protection, and cultural sensitivity.

3. Neeta, Baporikar, Ministry of Higher Education, CAS – Sultanate of Oman and Iqtidar Ali Shah, Ministry of Higher Education, CAS–Sultanate of Oman(2012) in the article "Quality of Higher Education in the 21st century - A Case of Oman concluded that the biggest challenge facing HEIs is the low level of the English language of school graduates. Some criticized the existing teaching methodology while other criticized the contents of courses is the main cause of failure of GFP (General Foundation Program). Almost all academics researchers have agreed that the school education provided to the student is very weak to fit them for higher education. Resultantly, a gap exists between school education and university education. Therefore, GFP has been started in all HEIs to fill the gap. However, GFP itself will not be able to improve students' skill in English, mathematics and IT despite of good contents, appropriate teaching methodology and well qualified foreign faculty in all HEIs. Thus, basic required skill including English, mathematics and IT is one of the barriers in the way of acquisition of knowledge and skill at HEIs in Oman.

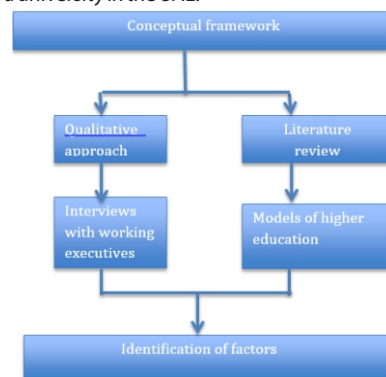
4. Ziyana Ali AL-Hinai(2014) in the article titled "Factors Influencing Academic Staff Job Satisfaction of Higher Education in the Sultanate of Oman" has summarized the findings as follows: The general factors that influence academic staff job satisfaction have been reviewed with a support from past researchers and the literature. The academic job satisfaction is a key concern in higher education for most of the countries worldwide such as; UK, USA, Portugal, Jordan, Pakistan, Uganda, KSA, Kuwait, Oman, etc. Most of these countries share the similar factors but differs in the level and strength of its relationship with the job satisfaction. The present research have considered presenting a number of models related to the factors that influence academic staff job satisfaction derived and tested from previous researchers. These factors were related to management, pay and salary, co-workers, working environment, promotions, acknowledgment and recognition, demographic information, Autonomy, emotional well-being, challenges and accomplishments etc. Therefore, the most common factors that have been derived from the literature were identified to be; the pay and salary, working environment, promotion opportunities, job security, management system and supervision, HOD behavior.

5. Al-Sadi, H. (2012); Giving Voice to the Voiceless: Learner Autonomy as a Tool to Enhance Quality in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education in Oman, Oman Quality Network Regional Conference on Quality Management & Enhancement in Higher Education dated 20-21 February 2012, Muscat, Oman, and The Ministry of Education,

New Zealand concluded in their article that there is no formula that will guarantee learning for every student in every context. However, there is extensive, well-documented evidence about the kinds of teaching approaches that consistently have a positive impact on student learning. This evidence tells us that students learn best when teachers create a supportive learning environment, encourage reflective thought and action, enhance the relevance of new learning, facilitate shared learning, make connections to prior learning and experience, provide sufficient opportunities to learn, and inquire into the teaching–learning relationship.

Conceptual framework:

The conceptual framework has been developed with the help of major factors that have been derived from the review of literature and qualitative data. The framework consists of dependent and independent variables. The research aims to identify the most important factors influencing the choice of a higher education program in a university in the UAE. The above conceptual framework summarizes the aim of this research in which it intends to study the factors that influences the choice of a higher education program in a university in the UAE.



At this stage of the research, the research hypothesis could be clearly stated.

The following research hypothesis will be tested.

Hypothesis of the Study

- H0:** There is no significant relationship between career advancement and higher education of the working executives in the UAE.
- H1:** There is a significant relationship between career advancement and higher education of the working executives in the UAE.

Methodology:

The type of research undertaken by the researcher is a descriptive research. The purpose of this study was to analyze the impact of higher education on career advancement of working professionals in the UAE. Taking the purpose of the study and the objectives of the study into account, the researcher followed a descriptive approach. In this research, a study on the prospects of career advancement through higher education among the working executives in UAE has been conducted based on the sampling method called 'simple random sampling method'.

Sample frame:

The sample frame of the study comprises those candidates who have completed their higher education program like MBA, MSc, MCom, MCA and MA from IGNOU, SMU and MKU respectively during the period from 2006 to 2013.

These students are those who completed their higher education program at *Wisdom Education Group, UAE during 2006-13*. *Wisdom Education Group* is the official learning center for Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), Sikkim Manipal University (SMU) and Madurai Kamaraj University (MKU) in UAE.

A simple random sampling technique has been used to choose the sample units from the sample frame.

Sample size

The sample size of the study undertaken was '100' sampling units from the above sample frame. The sampling units referred to here are the 100 working executives who have completed their higher education program from Wisdom Education Group, UAE.

Tools and Techniques used for Data Collection

The study was conducted using both primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected using questionnaire. The questionnaire was pre-tested on a small trial group comprising 20 respondents to ensure the validity and reliability of the research instrument. On the basis of the response to the pilot study, necessary modifications were made in the questionnaire and the modified questionnaire was used for the collection of primary data. A survey method was used to collect data. The questionnaire mainly consisted of closed ended and open ended questions. To fulfil the objectives of the study, the researcher has used 12 variables in the study.

Tools used for Data Analysis

The primary data collected were consolidated to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for the analysis. The consolidated data were finally analyzed by classifying, tabulating and applying statistical tools such as percentage analysis, coefficient of correlation, and Chi-square test.

Limitations of the study:

This study is not free from limitations. Following are the limitations that the researcher could find in the study:

1. Due to time, money, and energy constraints the researcher had to limit the sample size of the study to a small number. Albeit small was the sample size, the researcher could come to meaningful conclusions of the study.
2. A factor analysis could have been adopted by the researcher for studying the factor loadings of the underlying variables under each factor that contributed to the career advancement of the working executives.

Data Analysis & Interpretation

Analysis of Career Advancement through Higher Education

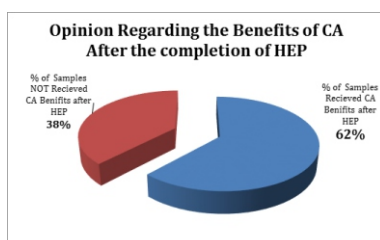
Career advancement through Higher Education among the working executives can be analyzed by considering the opinion of respondents whether they gained any kind of career advancement benefits because of the Higher Education Programme they have completed successfully during their working tenure.

Table 4.1

Opinion Regarding if Benefits of CA have been effected After the completion of HEP			
Particulars	Opinion on CA Benefits after HEP		Total
	Yes	No	
No: of Respondents	62	38	100

Source: Primary Data

Figure 4.1



Source: Primary Data

Chi-Square Analysis

Hypothesis;

H0: There is no significant relationship between Career Advancement and Higher Education of the working executives in the UAE

H1: There is a significant relationship between Career Advancement and Higher Education of the working executives in the UAE

Formula for Chi-Square Analysis

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

Where: χ^2 is the chi square statistic.
 Σ = summation symbol.
 O = Number observed.
 E = Number expected.

Table 4.2

Chi-Square Analysis				
Sl. No	O (Observed)	E (Expected)	(O-E)2	(O-E)2 / E
1	62	50	144	2.88
2	38	50	144	2.88
$\chi^2=$	5.76			

Source: Primary Data

So, Calculated value = 5.76

Calculation of Table value

Degrees of Freedom = (n-1)
 Where n = 2 = (2-1) = 1
 Level of Significance = 0.05
 Table Value = 3.841

Interpretation:

Since the Calculated Value is greater than the Table Value, we **REJECT** the Null Hypothesis H0: There is no significant relationship between Career Advancement and Higher Education of the working executives in the UAE.

Therefore we **ACCEPT** the alternative hypothesis that "There is a significant relationship between Career Advancement and Higher Education of the working executives in the UAE".

Correlation analysis

The correlation analysis intends to find out the strength of the linear relationship between two variables. For example, how strong is the relationship between higher education (*Independent variable*) and career advancement (dependent variable)? The SPSS results of Pearson's coefficient of correlation 'r' were calculated between the variables and the result showed the following:

Higher education (HE) and Career Advancement (CA) are significantly correlated with $r = .751$ ($p < 0.01$).

The results also can be interpreted based on Guilford's rule of thumb which states that, higher education and career advancement 'r' value falls between 0.7 to 0.9 (.751) and therefore, higher education and career advancement are highly correlated. Therefore, an evidence of a true relationship has been found and the null hypothesis H0, which stated that "there is no relationship between higher education and career advancement among working executives" is rejected. Thereby, the research hypothesis has been validated.

Summary of the findings

After having conducted the descriptive study on the topic "A Study on the Prospects of Career Advancement through Higher Education among the Working Executives in the UAE" it was found that there is a significant relationship between Career Advancements and Higher Education among the working executives in the UAE.

Conclusions

Meaningful conclusions were drawn from the findings of the study on the topic "A Study on the Prospects of Career Advancement through Higher Education among the Working Executives in the UAE". The major finding was that there is a significant relationship between career advancements and Higher education among the working executives in the UAE.

Recommendations

As the study was restricted only to a few Indian Universities, there could have been ample representation of Foreign Universities offering the Higher Education Programs in UAE. This would reflect many other parameters to be considered to enhance the effectiveness of the study like facilities and infrastructure of the Universities, the location in which the university is situated, placement opportunities etc. which would help in comparing Indian Universities with Foreign Universities.

The Career Advancement Benefits gained by working executives could be extended to other academic modules and trainings like short term courses and memberships in Professional educational bodies and Associations.

Dissertations/Theses

- '1. TNE in the UAE' By Alison Devine, Regional Manager Education UK, Middle East
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