Andrews University

School of Education

Educational Leadership and Administration Department

RESEARCH PAPER- INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements of the Course

LEAD 778: Global Education Study Tour

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August 2022

Introduction

Education is a complex discipline constantly evolving based on a myriad of factors. These include the conflicting priorities of its diverse constituents- students, parents, faculty, administrators, scholars, government, society, accrediting bodies, and national and international partners, among other stakeholders. These conflicting priorities have resulted in increased demands for institutions of education to serve diverse student populations, which have, in turn, resulted in evolving trends and outcomes across the globe. This article aims to understand these conflicting priorities and their influence on international education trends and outcomes in Israel, Jordan, and Egypt. Moreover, this article aims to investigate trends related to the internationalization of education in these countries, and their collective impact on equity and access, public and private funding of education, and the global privatization of education.

Israel

In Israel, higher education was typically within reach for the wealthy and was traditionally perceived as a symbol of higher socioeconomic status (Davidovitch & Cohen, 2021). This perpetuated generational socioeconomic status, both for those from more affluent backgrounds and those experiencing poverty. More specifically, access to higher education for the wealthy allowed them to maintain a stronghold on knowledge acquisition and increased access to economic and financial opportunities, while those from lower socioeconomic status relinquished any hope of improving their economic stability and social mobility (Davidovitch & Cohen, 2021). Nevertheless, as higher education continues to be shaped by globalization, technological advances (primarily the internet), political reforms, shared resources, exchange of

information, market trends, and internationalization, so has access to educational opportunities for individuals from all socioeconomic strata (Altbach, 2016; Davidovitch & Cohen, 2021).

In line with these trends, Davidovitch and Cohen (2021) note that Israel's Council for Higher Education (CHE) was effected into law in 1958 as a government agency dedicated to making higher education accessible to all, as well as establishing accountability measures to ensure quality, and developing teaching and learning. The authors further posited that the CHE, in partnership with the Public Budgeting Committee (PBC), initiated a reform in the 1990s that resulted in increased access to higher education opportunities through the expansion of public colleges, the addition of nine new private institutions, and the introduction of foreign branches. While increased access is a positive outcome of this reform, it also resulted in decreased funding for public institutions, as well as increased competition that impacted the quality of students and teachers, thereby impacting the quality of teaching and learning in Israel (Davidovitch & Cohen, 2021).

The negative impact of the reform led to criticisms of Israel's system of higher education and placed it at the center of a variety of public debates founded on "how to connect between academic freedom, expressed by an almost completely free academic "market" that affords access to higher education to all Israel's residents, and regulation of higher education that seeks to maintain its quality while also maintaining access" (Davidovitch & Cohen, 2021, p. 29). Coupled with issues related to the public funding of higher education, and consistent with similar outcomes across international lines, this delicate balance is often unattainable and brings equity to the forefront of higher education discourse.

Davidovitch & Cohen (2021) noted that the PBC allocates funding to institutions of higher education based on the number of students budgeted for in advance, which some argue

perpetuates the disadvantages of periphery institutions in comparison to those located in central Israel. One of the issues the authors note is that students from peripheral locations do not have the same access to financial support and other resources those from central Israel might have. This places them at a disadvantage from the onset of their postsecondary educational pursuit. While not overtly described as an 'equitable' practice by Davidovitch and Cohen (2021), their recommendations to combat this issue revolve around implementing a budgeting policy based on the geographical location of institutions, which factors students' socioeconomic means and will translate to increased tuition assistance. The goal would be to reduce the financial disparities that may impact access and completion of students in peripheral areas when compared to students located in central Israel.

The concept of centers and peripheries is relevant on both national and international fronts. Like Israel, the United States' central universities (primarily Ivy League institutions) dominate and influence the majority of institutions of higher education (Altbach, 2016). Altbach (2016) notes, "debates concerning the undergraduate curriculum are often led by Harvard University or other top institutions and tend to trickle down to the others. When the elite sector gives its approval to a new trend… other institutions generally follow" (p. 82). This is further perpetuated by the allocation of funding granted to the top 100 institutions, which receive eighty percent of federal government research funds. This juxtaposition is worth noting, as it is a trend not only Israel and the United States, but also in Britain and France (Altbach, 2016).

On an international scale, central institutions are considered prestigious, research-producing models that form part of an international knowledge system, while peripheral institutions may have limited access to the same resources (Altbach, 2016). In addition, central universities primarily communicate knowledge and research in the English language, which is

considered the global language of science (Altbach, 2016). Because scholars and researchers tend to matriculate and work for central universities for research and doctoral training, they will continue to have a stronghold over scientific materials and published research. As Altbach (2016) posits, "central universities are, almost without exception, located in countries with high per capita incomes, a high level of technological development, and substantial academic traditions; they use a major world language and possess all the infrastructures of intellectual life" (p.88). Peripheral universities, due to their limited infrastructure are dependent on central universities for direction and tend to follow the research structures and methodologies implemented by central universities. In this regard, peripheral universities will continue to lag behind in innovation, original research, access to funding, and prestige (Altbach, 2016).

Tel Aviv University

Tel Aviv University (TAU) is currently ranked the second-best institution of higher education in Israel (U.S. News & World Report, 2022). It is considered the largest institution of higher education in Israel and ranked among the top 100 universities internationally (Tel Aviv University, 2021). It has over 30,000 students, over 2,000 international students, 130 research institutions, boasts over 1,200 researchers, and is consistently ranked in the world's top 20 scientific citations (Tel Aviv University, 2021). While it takes pride in its efforts to cater to the needs of its diverse student body, it has over 60 English-led academic programs, although they welcome students from across the globe. Their Study Abroad Partners program page notes that TAU maintains partnerships and study abroad agreements with several top institutions around the world, while placing a special emphasis on the United States. In addition, all applicants of TAU International must provide proof of English proficiency to be admitted (Tel Aviv University, n.d.). Similarly, the Center for Language Excellence in the Division of Languages

primarily focuses on helping students improve their English for academic and professional

purposes, as well as a handful of other languages. Given these requirements and offerings, their

international marketing and recruitment efforts appear to mostly capture students from the

United States and other English-speaking countries.

TAU's offerings and recruitment approach fall in line with the concept described by

Altbach as 'English hegemony', which posits that English is the main international language,

dominating scholarship and research. In addition, Altbach (2016) notes that English is

governmentally recognized in over 70 countries and dominates world scholarship through

research and publishing in academic journals and books produced in English. Given its

contributions to the scientific community worldwide, its size, location, and notoriety, TAU can

be considered a central institution of higher education both nationally and internationally.

Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJ) is currently ranked the third best institution of

higher education in Israel and like TAU, ranked among the top research institution, and among

100 leading universities worldwide (U.S. News & World Report, 2022; Hebrew University of

Jerusalem, 2022). In addition, it has over 23,000 students representing 90 other countries and

boasts over 90 agreements with 27 other countries for student exchange programs. They note,

"students carry out advanced studies at the Hebrew University and return to their home countries

where they apply the knowledge they gained to improve the lives of their local communities"

(Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2022). HUJ is also considered a pioneer in research and

innovation and offers courses in languages other than English, further positioning it as a notable

institution that embodies diversity, equity, and inclusion. While HUJ is considered a central

university, it has taken an inclusive approach to ensuring students give back to their local communities both nationally and internationally.

Altbach (2016) notes that central universities are pivotal to their local communities. He posits that they contribute socially, politically, and culturally to their local regions. HUJ is a representation of this concept. Their website has a designated page titled 'University in the Community', which highlights their intentional position of responsibility and leadership within Jerusalem and Israel (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2022). Community involvement efforts include those organized at the campus level, others are part of programs of study, other initiatives organized by departments, and those organized by the Student Union. Altbach (2016) further notes that universities function in several different contexts simultaneously. Many are part of both an international knowledge system, while also contributing knowledge and technological advances in their local communities, and while engaging in an active exchange of ideas internationally (Altbach, 2016). HUJ captures all these efforts through its various offerings and contributions to their national and international communities.

Egypt

Egypt's educational system consists of two parallel structures- either the secular structure or the al-Azhar religious structure (Fitria et al., 2022). The former is overseen by the Ministry of Education, which manages policy creation, planning, measures of quality control, and development, with government officials providing oversight, while the latter is overseen by the Ministry of al-Azhar (Fitria et al., 2022). As further noted by Fitria et al. (2022), within the al-Azhar structure, the Islamic religion is embedded into the curriculum, all teachers within the structure are educated within said structure, and there is no technical education offered. In addition, the private sector plays a pivotal role in meeting the educational needs of the country.

These are considered non-governmental institutions that offer a wider range in programs and curricula, and can be operated by religious, secular, or individual owners- both nationally and internationally. This can result in following the curriculum of another country, such as the United States, but must be accredited by the Ministry of Education in order for graduates to be eligible to matriculate in Egyptian governmental institutions of higher education (Fitria et al., 2022). In addition, students who participate in the al-Azhar educational system are also limited in terms of the governmental institutions they are eligible to attend, which often results in their needing to pursue postsecondary education in al-Azhar institutions or private institutions. Private institutions of higher education are also regulated by the government, for quality assurance and consistency with the state's educational policy (Fitria et al., 2022)

Egypt's educational system has traditionally used grade promotion exams, which determine the type of next-level education students are eligible for (Mirshak, 2020). Moreover, this provides high-scoring students the opportunity to matriculate in their institutions (high schools and universities) of choice, while lower-scoring scoring students are funneled into technical schools or less desirable paths. The first state examination takes place in the eighth grade, which has resulted in a causal sequence regarding the outcome of students' postsecondary education. Given the implications of this state examination, students have had to resort to private courses to learn how to succeed on these exams, but many have also succumbed to cheating practices to attempt a better future (Mirshak, 2020). Those who can afford private courses are likely students from higher socioeconomic status, which perpetuates the inequities in terms of access and educational attainment of those from lower socioeconomic strata.

In 2019, current Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi launched the National Project for the Development of the New Education System to combat the challenges of the education

system in Egypt. As cited by Mirshak (2020), "Egypt ranks 133rd globally in terms of the quality of primary education (World Economic Forum, 2017), where 50% of students are functionally illiterate after five years of schooling (Curnow, 2018)" (p. 40). Mirshak (2020) further notes that the reformed curriculum will adapt British and American practices, and will be partly funded by the World Bank. According to Oxford Business Group (2021), this educational reform is also known as Education 2.0 (EDU 2.0), which aligns with Egypt's Vision 2030 plan to strategically improve economic, environmental, and social development. In addition, it is intent on changing a culture of memorization of information to one of critical thinking, student centered pedagogy, competency-based life learning, and mastery of technology (Oxford Business Group, 2021). This change is particularly important to Egypt's educational system in terms of equity and seeks to move away from the detrimental state examination that hinders the educational growth of many students. This is especially crucial for students from resource-limited schools who may not have access to the necessary resources to perform well on these mandated state exams that play such a significant role in their educational outcomes.

It is also worth noting that EDU 2.0 brought about the implementation of several initiatives centered on shifting the public's view on education, as well as increasing the use of technology in the classroom. The Covid-19 pandemic, while having had a negative economic impact, propelled the increased use of technology to facilitate teaching and learning. In March 2020, Egypt closed all of its schools and shifted to an entirely online delivered curriculum in an effort to slow down the transmission of the virus (Oxford Business Group, 2021). Nevertheless, while positively impactful in this regard, the economic setback caused by the pandemic has called for an increased need for private investment in education (Oxford Business Group, 2021). In addition, public funding for private institutions is quite limited, and the government has

sought to increase investment by private and foreign funds. Prior to the pandemic, 2018 Law No. 62 was issued by the government to allow foreign universities to establish international branches in Egypt without needing a previously required treaty. This law is expected to exponentially increase the number of international students matriculated in Egypt (Oxford Business Group, 2021), thereby increasing private investment in education, while lessening the financial burden on the government.

Nile Union Academy

Nile Union Academy is a private, Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) boarding school located in Egypt, offering grades 8-12, with a total enrollment of 135 students (Nile Union Academy, 2021). Although both Arabic and English are the two core languages used on campus, all courses are taught in English. It is worth noting that although this institution of secondary education is recognized and accredited in the United States by the Adventist Accrediting Association, as well as the Middle States Association, it has not been given national recognition nor granted accreditation by the Egyptian Ministry of Education (Nile Union Academy, 2021; Rose & Wixwat, 2021). Furthermore, this prevents graduates from army exemption, which allows high school diploma holders to serve two years in the army instead of the three required.

Based on the feedback shared by the staff at NAU, their non-accredited status has also resulted in students leaving their local and national communities to continue their studies outside of Egypt, taking with them the wealth of knowledge and future contributions that could have served as opportunities to contribute to their local communities and the expansion of NUA's offerings through alumni involvement and contributions. As a result of this, the NUA board is seeking to obtain accreditation as an international institution, which would allow it to maintain

its American curriculum, have oversight over the selection of teaching staff, and maintain its

SDA principles, while being recognized by the government (Rose & Wixwat, 2021).

Jordan

Since the late 1970s, Jordan has worked toward increasing access to primary education

for all children, having accomplished nearly 97% attendance in this short span (UNICEF, n.d.).

In addition, in spite of this increased access there is a need for quality assurance measures and

financial investment. UNICEF (n.d.) notes that children from low socioeconomic backgrounds

are often unable to attend school, often facing child labor responsibilities. In addition, gender

differences can be observed. On one hand, male students are likely to drop out of school due to

labor obligations, and poor academic performance, among others. On the other hand, female

students are more likely to remain home to care for children and caring from family, and more

likely to be married at a young age (UNICEF, n.d.). In addition, USAID (2022) notes that by the

third grade, only 34% of children read at grade level. Along with these obstacles, the Jordanian

population and influx of refugees have placed significant strain on the education system.

In 2018, the Ministry of Education launched a 5-year Education Strategic Plan to combat

these challenges (USAID, 2022). The United States is a contributor to this plan through USAID,

which is an organization that takes an active role in international development and humanitarian

efforts that transcend funding. USAID (2022) supports the Government of Jordan by partnering

with the Ministry of Education and Public Works and Housing to rehabilitate the educational

infrastructure- both the physical aspects of educational facilities, as well as strengthening the

educational opportunities and outcomes of students. Efforts also include training teachers and

fostering parent and community engagement in the public school sector, all of which have contributed to the expansion of equitable education (USAID, 2022).

Implications for Administrators

The educational trends observed within the institutions and countries visited are a direct representation of the impact of globalization and internationalization. As observed in Israel, Jordan, and Egypt, educational systems can be strained due to increased demand and limited funding to support the necessary infrastructure to promote an equitable learning environment for all, irrespective of socioeconomic status. It is also evident how Western educational practices dominate the educational landscape in all three countries, with English being considered a critical language within all three countries and the institutions visited.

While institutions may cater to diverse constituents, they share one commonality- all are impacted by the political, societal, governmental, national, and international forces that influence their respective approach to the facilitation of education. As administrators and policy makers, it is critical to keep abreast of these trends and take a proactive approach to handling the challenges associated with rapid growth and change in a competitive global landscape, while equally investing in the success of our local communities. Through these efforts we are not only affecting short-term change, but also investing in the future of all vested constituents.

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