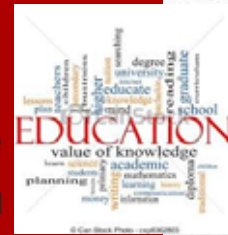


Reconsidering Quality of Theses/ Projects in terms of Innovative Topic Choice: A case study of a university in Lebanon



*By: Fatima Awada
Lebanese American University*

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Outline:

- Introduction
- Rationale
- Literature Review
- Methodology
- Results
- Conclusion and Recommendations

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Introduction

This study tackles an issue that has been overlooked in the region

- ❑ Since writing an MA thesis/ project is a requirement for most of the MA students
- ❑ And because few research was conducted in the field in terms of the quality of the topic choice and its relation to the latest trends/ roles and responsibilities of faculty member's supervision of theses
- ❑ And to provide quality assurance mechanism in HE institutions to keep up with the international standards

The issue of quality of theses/ projects should be investigated further

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Rationale:

This study was conducted for different reasons:

- ❑ Demands for quality assurance worldwide
- ❑ Interest in the topic
- ❑ To shed light and diagnose the system's status and if needed underline the importance of re-evaluating it.

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Research Questions



The research project on which this article is based aims to answer two basic research questions:

- ☐ To what extent are MA students taking into consideration the latest research trends when selecting their theses/project topics?
- ☐ To what extent are faculty members raising the bar and considering the trends and the quality of theses they are supervising?

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Literature Review



Emerging literature stresses three educational standpoints:

- ☐ Research Supervision ensuring quality
- ☐ Trends in educational research and choosing a good topic
- ☐ Analysis of the current situation of higher education in Lebanon in terms of quality and research

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Literature Review(cont.)

I. Research Supervision ensuring quality:

- ❑ Effectiveness of academics' supervision being questioned
(Dinham & Scott 1999; Ortun 1999)

- ❑ Supervisors setting standards for theses/ projects i.e. no clear standards stated

Bourke (2007)

- ❑ Role of Higher Education institutions to ensure quality

Masri & Wilkens (2011)

- ❑ Ensuring a good research environment for students

Baptista & Huet (2012)

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Literature Review(cont.)

II. Trends in educational research and choosing a good topic

- Topics are as wide as human knowledge

Verbra (2005)

- A good topic is one that is interesting to the researcher, the advisor and the research community.

DesJardins (1995)

- To determine a good topic students should keep track of the latest research being conducted

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Literature Review(cont.)

II. Latest trends in Education

- ☐ Student's university and career readiness
- ☐ Taking a longitudinal perspective in education
- ☐ Shift from print to digital content in education
- ☐ Importantly individualized learning.

Smith III, & Sandvik (2012)

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Literature Review(cont.)

II. Latest trends in Education

- ☐ Investment in early education
- ☐ Assessing common core standards
- ☐ Online courses effectiveness
- ☐ Change in traditional higher education degrees
- ☐ Adaptive learning in K-12 and higher education, and diversity

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Literature Review(cont.)

II. Latest trends in Education

- ☐ Standards-based education
- ☐ Experiential learning
- ☐ Employment needs
- ☐ school readiness indicators
- ☐ Quality systems
- ☐ Professional development
- ☐ Assessment in ECE
- ☐ Leadership in ECE centers
- ☐ Environmental rating scales in childhood programs

Olsen & Fuller (2010)

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Literature Review(cont.)

III. Analysis of the current situation of higher education in Lebanon in terms of quality and research

“ Research policy in universities and academic institutions have no clear objective serving the goals of the university or society, and the studies that are carried out are done so without purpose.”

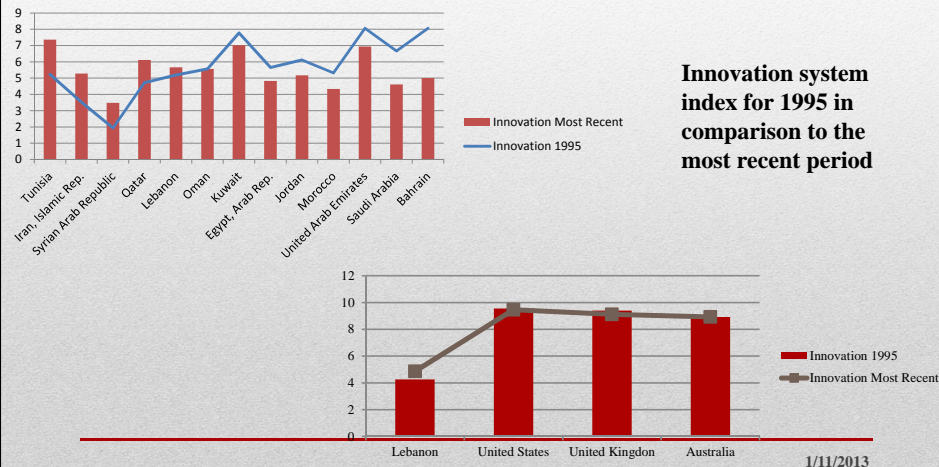
Al- Rashdan (2009, p.82),

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Literature Review(cont.)

III. Analysis of the current situation of higher education in Lebanon in terms of quality and research



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Literature Review(cont.)

III. Analysis of the current situation of higher education in Lebanon in terms of quality and research

- Arab Knowledge report states (2009, p. 184), "Despite the efforts exerted by the Arab scientists and researchers, the extremely low amounts spent by Arab countries on research and development have had a negative impact on Arab innovation performance in both quantitative and qualitative terms."

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Methodology

Sample:

- ☐ 42 MA in Education students currently working on their thesis/ project
- ☐ Faculty members of the department of Education
- ☐ 84 students who have submitted their thesis/ project in the last 5 years

Instruments:

- ☐ Surveys
- ☐ Face to face interviews
- ☐ Data-base of theses/ projects in the last three years

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Results

Trends in Educational research

Students surveys and faculty responses revealed that:

- ☐ Students perceive that they take into account the latest trends in education when selecting a thesis topic
- ☐ Faculty considered that the emphasis courses are not enough to discuss and ensure the students' consideration of the latest trends
- ☐ Faculty stated that a lot of personal effort from the student is required to keep track of the research globally and consider it when choosing a topic.
- ☐ Lebanese context lags way behind in terms of research

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Results (cont.)

- **Trends in Educational research**

Data analysis of research topics (current & last five years) revealed:

- ☐ Students are certainly tackling topics that are of great importance to their work place and the societal needs but are mainly tackling topics that have been of importance for decades.
- ☐ However, in comparison to the literature students are not considering the emergence of new trends and priorities that need to be tackled and addressed in Lebanon.

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Results (cont.)

- **Faculty member's consideration of quality and added value**

The researcher tackled the issue of quality in terms of time, advising and added value

The majority of students:

- ☐ Were **not** satisfied with their committee member's effectiveness in recommending articles and scholars to aid them in their study.
- ☐ Considered that their committee members were somehow strict in their correction criteria for the students' work.

Only 41.7% of students:

- ☐ Had the perception that their committee members are raising the bar and recommending changes of their work.

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Results (cont.)

Faculty member's consideration of quality and added value

What do faculty emphasize on?

- ☐ Common themes emerged
- ☐ Research design
- ☐ Well- structured literature review
- ☐ Sound topic that contributes to the field

Considering latest trend in education when choosing a research topic was not mentioned not from the faculty nor from the student's perspective

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Results (cont.)

Faculty member's consideration of quality and added value

Quality Assurance mechanisms

Faculty and through the interviews revealed that the departments' top priority is to create rubrics and forums to assess:

- ☐ The quality of theses topics before students start working on their thesis/ project
- ☐ The quality of the theses/ projects conducted

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Results (cont.)

Added Value to the field: student's perception

- ❑ Although students perceive that their research topics are of added value to the field but the analysis of the topics addressed in the last 5 years show that students' consideration of added value to the field of education is only at the local level.

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Conclusion & Recommendations

- ❑ Since students are tackling the issue of trends in educational research from a local perspective faculty should play a vital role in raising students' awareness of globalization, quality assurance and international standards and emphasizing the importance of choosing an innovative research problem to discuss
- ❑ Faculty are aware of the weakness of quality considerations and are working on developing quality assurance mechanisms for theses/ projects from different perspectives

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Thank you for listening

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