

**A STUDY ON ACADEMIC STAFF'S  
PERCEPTIONS OF INTERNATIONALISATION  
OF THE CURRICULUM IN UNIVERSITY Of  
TECHNOLOGY AND APPLIED SCIENCE,  
SALALAH**

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**UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA**

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by

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**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

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## DEDICATION

*To: My Mother*  
*My Father*  
*My Wives*  
*My daughters &*  
*My Family*

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Prophet Muhammad, (peace and blessings be upon him), said, "*whoever is not grateful to people, he is not grateful to Allah*" (Ahmad, Tirmidhi).

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

GA	Graduate Attributes
HE	Higher Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HEP	Higher Education Private Institutions
IaH	Internationalisation at Home
IoC	Internationalisation of the Curriculum
OAAA	Oman Academic Accreditation Authority
UTAS	University of Technology and Applied Sciences
UTAS-Salalah	University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Salalah

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**KAJIAN PERSEPSI STAF AKADEMIK TERHADAP  
PENGANTARABANGSAAN KURIKULUM DI UNIVERSITY OF  
TECHNOLOGY AND APPLIED SCIENCE, SALALAH**

**ABSTRAK**

Pengantarabangsaan kurikulum atau *Internationalisation of the Curriculum* (IoC) telah menjadi trend penting dalam pendidikan tinggi di seluruh dunia. Walau bagaimanapun, terdapat kekurangan dari segi kajian empirikal dalam bidang penyelidikan ini di negara-negara Arab, termasuklah dari segi konteks pendidikan tinggi Oman. Justeru, kajian ini dijalankan untuk mengukur persepsi staf akademik akan pengantarabangsaan kurikulum pada peringkat institusi, jabatan dan kursus di Universiti of Technology and Applied Science (UTAS-Salalah), Salalah, Oman. Selain itu, kajian ini juga telah menyelidik bagaimana persepsi kakitangan akademik terhadap pengantarabangsaan kurikulum berbeza-beza mengikut pengalaman bertahun-tahun dalam bidang pendidikan tinggi, di UTAS-Salalah dan jabatan. Kajian ini juga cuba mengukur persepsi kakitangan akademik terhadap tiga tahap teras pengantarabangsaan kurikulum (kesedaran, kecekapan, dan kepakaran) dalam pengantarabangsaan kurikulum di UTAS-Salalah dan mengenal pasti cabaran yang dihadapi oleh kakitangan akademik dalam pengantarabangsaan kurikulum di UTAS-Salalah. Reka bentuk kaedah campuran berjujukan penjelasan dua fasa telah digunakan untuk menjawab lima soalan kajian yang dikemukakan dalam kajian. Kedua-dua data kuantitatif dan kualitatif dikumpulkan. Data kuantitatif dikumpul menggunakan soal selidik yang disesuaikan manakala data kualitatif pula dikumpul melalui kaedah temu bual separa berstruktur. Sampel kajian terdiri daripada 267 pensyarah akademik dalam fasa kuantitatif dan sembilan staf akademik untuk temu



bual separa berstruktur. Data kuantitatif dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif dan ANOVA sehala dalam SPSS, manakala data kualitatif dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik. Analisis data menunjukkan bahawa aspek antarabangsa diterapkan dalam kursus-kursus yang diajar di UTAS-Salalah. Dapatan kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa tiada perbezaan antara disiplin dari segi persepsi staf akademik terhadap IoC. Satu lagi dapatan kajian yang mengejutkan ialah IoC tidak terjejas oleh kelayakan kakitangan akademik, pengalaman selama bertahun-tahun dan jabatan. Analisis data juga telah mendedahkan bahawa tiada sokongan sebenar daripada pihak jabatan terhadap kakitangan akademik untuk menyokong IoC. Perlu dinyatakan bahawa peringkat kursus memperoleh markah tertinggi dari segi persepsi terhadap IoC. Hal ini demikian kerana kakitangan akademik mempunyai kawalan penuh terhadap kursus mereka dan bertanggungjawab dalam mengantarabangsakan kursus mereka.

**A STUDY ON ACADEMIC STAFF’S PERCEPTIONS OF  
INTERNATIONALISATION OF THE CURRICULUM IN UNIVERSITY OF  
TECHNOLOGY AND APPLIED SCIENCE, SALALAH**

**ABSTRACT**

The internationalisation of the curriculum (IoC) has been a significant trend in higher education across the globe. However, there is a dearth of empirical studies on this area of research in the Arab countries, including the Omani higher education context. Thus, this study was conducted to explore academic staff’s perceptions of curriculum internationalisation at: institutional, departmental and course levels at University of Technology and Applied Science (UTAS-Salalah), Salalah, Oman. Additionally, the study investigated how academic staff’s perceptions of curriculum internationalisation differ according to their years of experience in higher education, years of experience at UTAS-Salalah, and departments. The study also tried to explore academic staff’s perceptions of the three core levels of curriculum internationalisation (awareness, competence, and expertise) at UTAS-Salalah and identify challenges that academic staff encounter in the internationalisation of the curriculum at UTAS-Salalah. The two-phased explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was utilized to answer five research questions addressed by the study. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. While the quantitative data were collected using an adapted questionnaire, the qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The samples of the study included 267 academic lecturers in the quantitative phase and nine academic staff for the semi-structured interviews. The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVA in SPSS, whereas the qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis. The data

analysis revealed that the UTAS-Salalah enjoys internationalisation of the curriculum. However, it is ad hoc process where there is no systematic approach to IoC. Important characteristic of IoC include courses infused with international aspects. The findings of the study also reported that there are no differences between disciplines in terms of academic staff's perceptions of IoC. Another surprising finding of the study is that the IoC is not affected by academic staff's qualification, years of experience, and departments. The analysis of data has also revealed that there is no real support from the departments to academic staff to support IoC. It is worth mentioning that the course level scored high scores in terms of perceptions of IoC. This is because academic staff have full control of their courses and are responsible for internationalising their courses.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

The global impact of globalisation has been widely acknowledged across the globe. The impact of this phenomenon is significant in the field of education, particularly in the context of higher education. The phenomenon of globalisation is gradually leading to the assimilation of diverse cultures into a homogenous global culture. The impact of globalisation on higher education is substantial. Hans De Wit, (2020) posited that the impact of globalisation on universities is substantial, with universities serving as pivotal agents in the process of globalisation. The importance of new perspectives on the Internationalisation of the Curriculum (IoC), pedagogy, and educational practises in contemporary times was underscored. New modes of thinking are cultivated by prioritising empathy and compassion towards democratic principles, which involves nurturing students who possess a global perspective and recognise the equal rights of individuals. Globalisation pertains primarily to the movement of concepts, individuals, financial systems, and technological advancements.

Consequently, a significant number of researchers and scholars exhibit a high level of engagement in advocating for the advancement of internationalisation as an active reaction to the effects of globalization. Internationalisation pertains to the interconnections and interactions among individuals of diverse nationalities and cultural backgrounds. This emphasises the interconnectedness and interdependence of various cultures, nations, and individuals. Knight (2017), a renowned academic in the field of internationalisation, recognises that the impact of internationalisation extends beyond the global context and also encompasses the local context. According to a

report by the World Bank in 2018, the educational investments made by Middle Eastern countries did not produce the anticipated outcomes, thereby necessitating the establishment of a new framework.

The internationalisation of higher education has garnered significant attention due to a multitude of contributing factors. One of the contributing factors is the need for graduates to possess a global perspective and cultivate both international and national mindsets, as noted by Green & Whitsed, (2015a). However, universities are increasingly adopting commercial practises and pursuing internationalisation as a means of generating additional revenue (Beelen & Jones, 2018). The extensive body of literature on the internationalisation of higher education has primarily focused on the achievement of successful internationalisation, rather than critically examining the rationale behind its necessity (Buckner & Stein, 2019).

The 21st century has witnessed a notable advancement in higher education, characterised by a transition towards a more globalised approach. This shift is attributed to the increasing interconnectedness of the world through technology and communication, which has facilitated extensive intercultural interactions among nations. There exists a consensus among Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that internationalisation is not merely an option, but rather an indispensable component for the sustenance and progress of higher education in contemporary times. The International Association of Universities emphasises that the internationalisation of higher education is an unavoidable phenomenon in the current era of globalisation (IAU n.d.). Numerous scholars have expressed a similar viewpoint, advocating for a careful and deliberate approach to its implementation. According to scholarly perspectives, some argue that internationalisation of higher education constitutes the fundamental essence of the institution (Hans de Wit & Leask, 2018; Hans De Wit &

Leask, 2017; Knight, 2012). While the internationalisation process is widely supported, there are certain negative consequences associated with it, such as brain drain, the commercialization of higher education, and the proliferation of low-quality "degree mills" (Beelen & Jones, 2015; Knight, 2017). Undoubtedly, the advantages of internationalisation outweigh the potential risks associated with it.

Academic faculty are key agents of internationalisation of the curriculum, as they design, deliver, and evaluate the courses and programs that students experience. However, academic faculty may have different perceptions of internationalisation of the curriculum depending on their disciplinary backgrounds, institutional contexts, personal experiences, professional development, and motivations (Clarke & Kirby, 2022). Some faculty may see internationalisation of the curriculum as an opportunity to enrich their teaching and learning practices, to engage with diverse perspectives and sources of knowledge, to collaborate with colleagues and students across borders and cultures, and to contribute to social justice and global citizenship. Other faculty may see internationalisation of the curriculum as a challenge, a burden, or a threat to their academic autonomy, identity, or values.

Therefore, it is important to understand how academic faculty perceive internationalisation of the curriculum and what factors influence their perceptions. This can help higher education leaders and policymakers to provide adequate support, incentives, recognition, and guidance for faculty to engage in internationalisation of the curriculum in meaningful and effective ways. It can also help faculty themselves to reflect on their own positionality and role as actors in the field of internationalisation and decolonization of higher education.

## **1.2 Research Background**

Internationalisation of higher education has been a fundamental aspect of research in the last two decades, and it has gained high priorities in the agenda of higher education (Beelen & Jones, 2015a; De Wit, 2020a; De Wit & Leask, 2017; Williams & Lee, 2015). Several researchers have confirmed the significant importance of internationalisation as one of the keys to the development of higher education institutions (De Wit & Jones, 2018; De Wit & Leask, 2017). Consequently, practical, and theoretical studies have grown tremendously in this field with varied aspects of internationalisation. Although there is an understanding of the changes that have taken place for graduates worldwide, higher education institutions have not realized these changes (De Wit, 2020b; Williams & Lee, 2015). Higher education internationalisation is viewed as a demand against the hegemony of globalization (Yemini, 2014).

Several scholars have viewed globalization as a threat that should be fought because it can negatively affect the uniqueness of various countries and can expand marketization with no regard to local attributes (Leask, 2015a). In response to globalization, Higher education internationalisation has been on the rise worldwide. Hence, various higher education institutes have been involved in changing their policies to internationalisation policies to meet the internationalisation trends and to transfer their institutions to be more internationally relevant (De Wit, 2020b). Another element of Higher education internationalisation that has been on the rise is to equip graduates with important skills and knowledge that can help them survive in international contexts. However, internationalisation has been criticized for being not genuine and rhetorical. Further, internationalisation has been criticized as being restricted to attracting more international students, especially new international

students from developed countries (Ohajionu, 2021). Despite all the voices that have criticized the internationalisation, there seems to be an element of understanding among all that internationalisation of higher education has a benefit in making higher education internationally relevant (Buckner & Stein, 2020; Leask, 2013b; Veniger & Flander, 2017).

Compared to developed countries, the research on higher education internationalisation has not received the same attention in newly developed countries, especially in Oman (Al'Abri, 2015, 2016, 2019). Since the establishment of the first university in Oman in 1986, the government has understood the importance of higher education in developing the country (Al'Abri, 2019). This realization has pushed universities and higher education authorities to internationalise higher education. Internationalisation in Oman came in many different strategies (Alzadjali, 2018). Institution partnership with universities abroad, student mobility, staff mobility, training abroad, imported curriculum and textbooks are some of the strategies higher education pursues to maintain the quality of higher education. The field of higher education internationalisation in Oman has received inadequate attention, primarily on how internationalisation is conceptualized and how it is implemented in the Omani context. (Alzadjali, 2018). Apart from a few journal articles on higher education internationalisation in the Omani context, no empirical research has been carried out on both the theoretical and practical aspects of internationalisation of the curriculum (Albusaidi, 2022) . This has led to the assumption that the lack of empirical research on curriculum internationalisation of higher education in Oman could result in insufficient implementation and inadequate utilization of the opportunities of internationalisation.



In higher education institutions, “Faculty members are the key agent in institutional internationalisation...” (Friesen, 2013 p. 210). Faculty perception is significant in investigating internationalisation, as noted by many scholars (De Wit & Leask, 2015; Friesen, 2013; Oredein, 2016). However, the study of faculty perception is still understudied (Friesen, 2013). Thus, understanding of the perception of the faculty on curriculum internationalisation contributes to and inhibits the perspective of faculty on understanding internationalisation and helps in aligning internationalisation with the institutional practice or deviates from it. Therefore, understanding of the perception of the faculty is vital as it contributes to the success of the institution and enhances learning and teaching.

Internationalisation of higher education has been a global trend in higher education institutions. It is a response taken by several countries to face the effects of globalization and maintain respect for the national aspects of the country (Knight, 2008, 2017). However, globalization is the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, and ideas to any country. Further, the impact of globalization varies from country to country and depends on the nation’s culture, history, and values. Even though internationalisation is rooted in the foundations of every university or college, due to knowledge circulation, scholars and students, its concept has evolved over the years. To lay the foundation of this research, internationalisation is defined as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions, and delivery of post-secondary education” (Knight, 2004, p.7). Thus, globalization and internationalisation are linked differently (Knight, 2017).

Nevertheless, the internationalisation of higher education is considered the antidote to globalization. Globalization is homogenous education, and universities are the key sources of globalization (Leask, 2015a). It is the dominance of powerful

countries over less powerful and the conquer of the resourceful North over the poor South (Leask, 2015a). Thus, internationalisation was a prerogative in higher education.

Although the internationalisation of higher education is a relatively new area of research, it has become the most used strategic tool by governments, institutions, universities, and academic units to better position higher education and adapt to a rapidly changing world (De Wit, 2020b). Additionally, the internationalisation of higher education has been perceived and compared to other aspects of globalization, especially in European countries. However, neither globalization nor internationalisation in Oman has received researchers' attention and consideration (Al'Abri, 2015).

### **1.2.1 Internationalisation of the Curriculum**

Internationalisation of the curriculum (hereafter referred to as IoC) is considered a new field of study. However, in the last few years, there has been a growing interest in the internationalisation of the curriculum at the tertiary level in many countries worldwide. This growing interest is due to many factors: the tensions between north and south, the tension between local and global, and the dominance of "Westerner educational Models" over the developed countries dictating what knowledge is and who is qualified to learn it" (Leask, 2015 p. 21). Thus, it could be concluded that IoC is considered a suitable reaction that meets both local and international needs.

IoC, as defined by Leask, refers to " the incorporation of international, intercultural, and global dimensions into the content of the curriculum as well as the learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods, and support services of a program of study" (Leask, 2015, p.9). Although IoC has been investigated form

organizational perspectives, it was rarely studied from academic perspectives (Leask, 2013). Even though it is considered one of the most important practical strategies for producing real change in higher education institutes (Knight, 2008, 2017), studies have shown that IoC boosts entrepreneurship in colleges (Marantz-Gal, 2016; S. M. Renfors, 2021). It is regarded as a multilayer process with many stakeholders involved. Leask (2015) regards curriculum internationalisation as the most important step that an organization can undertake. She also adds that it is the “heart” of internationalisation, and its ultimate goal is to prepare students to accept each other and help them gain better international skills.

However, in Arab countries internationalisation is still very limited, leaving alone curriculum internationalisation which is rarely studied. This growing interest could be explained in terms of the growing demand for students studying abroad, the increasing of world technologies and the internet, and as a reaction to globalized education. It could also be due to the global and local issues in the Middle East in particular and around the globe in general. Welikala (2011) tries to answer the question of why curriculum internationalisation is important by stating that the “geopolitical” and “socio-economic” stresses the need for curriculum internationalisation (p. 4).

For Omani higher education to meet the new globalization requirements, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) must prepare the students and ensure that their curriculum fits the global and international standards. It is also a goal of the technical colleges to provide graduates who are skilful and have global standards. In this regard, there is substantial evidence that students in the Universities of Technology and Applied Science (hereafter referred to as UTAS) in Oman have multiplied over the years. As 26.3% of the total student’s population in HEIs are in technical colleges, it is appropriate and necessary to shed light on the internationalisation of the curriculum

in colleges of technology in general and the University of Technology and Applied Science-Salalah (hereafter referred to as UTAS-Salalah) in particular. There is substantial evidence of the importance of curriculum internationalisation over the world. This is a milestone for the colleges of technology to begin investigating IoC.

In order to understand how they interpret, enact and evaluate the process and outcomes of integrating international, intercultural and global dimensions into their teaching and learning practices, it is very important to study academic staff perception first (Wimpenny et al., 2022). Studying academic staff perception can help to identify the challenges and barriers that academics face in internationalising their curricula, such as lack of time, resources, support, incentives, recognition (Leask, 2020). It also can help explore the strategies and approaches that academics use to internationalise their curricula, such as reviewing the content and pedagogy, engaging with international partners and experts, providing opportunities for intercultural interaction and reflection, designing authentic assessment tasks.

There are many factors that have been studied in relation to the internationalisation of the curriculum which may hinder or facilitate IoC. Some of these factors include the mission, student population, faculty profile, geographic location, funding sources, level of resources, and orientation to local, national, and international interests of higher education institutions (Buckner, 2019; Nastase, 2020). Additionally, there has been increasing attention paid to the internationalisation of the curriculum at home and the shift from physical mobility to virtual mobility and exchange students (Nastase, 2020). However, years of experience in internalization have not been studied in relation to the internationalisation of the curriculum because other factors have been given more attention in the literature.

Additionally, examining how academic staff's perceptions differ according to years of experience could have practical implications for institutions seeking to internationalise their curriculum. For example, the academic staff with more years of experience have a different understanding of curriculum internationalisation compared to those with less experience, this could inform the development of training and professional development programs to support academic staff in their efforts to internationalise the curriculum.

The department could affect the internationalisation of the curriculum in several ways. For example, different departments may have different approaches to incorporating international, intercultural, and global dimensions into their curriculum. This could be influenced by factors such as the department's mission, student population, faculty profile, and orientation to local, national, and international interests (Leask, 2020). Additionally, the beliefs and values of faculty within a department could shape decisions about curriculum innovation for internationalisation (Green & Whitsed, 2018a). For example, in contexts where international education agendas are largely underpinned by economic rationales, faculty may view the internationalisation of the curriculum differently compared to those in contexts where other rationales are more prominent.

### **1.2.2 Higher Education in Oman**

Higher education in Oman has been recently established, compared to other developed countries in the region. The first higher education institution in Oman was Sultan Qaboos University, established in 1986. This is the only public university in the country and the premier university in Oman. The Ministry of Higher Education establishment in 1994 was the first cornerstone for many public and private higher

education institutions in Oman to flourish. However, few institutions of higher education between 1970 and 1980 gave certificates in the education and the health sector (Carroll & Palermo, 2006). According to the 2019 census (see Figure 2.2), presently, there are 60 higher education institutions in Oman; 31 public higher education and 29 private higher education institute (Education Council, n.d.). According to the late census, the number of students in these intuitions is more than one hundred and thirty-nine thousand (Omanuna, n.d.).

The government has opted for many strategical plans to help improve higher education, including student mobility, staff mobility, and co-joint programs with international universities. Not all higher education institutions in Oman fall under the umbrella of HE. For example, the Ministry of Manpower, the main governing body of technical colleges in Oman, do not have joint programs with other universities and does not have student mobility in cross-border exchange programs. The ministry relied on its expertise in developing a suitable curriculum for its seven colleges. Due to the variance of HEIs in Oman, the Oman Academic Accreditation Association (QAAA) was established in 2010 to make sure that Omani graduates from national HEIs can “compete up in the job market and to contribute effectively to the sustainable development of the country” (QAAA, n.d.).

The global and local cultures usually include knowledge of the history of other nations and the forces that shape the world. It also includes an understanding of the interconnectedness of society, understanding of the political and economic issues that shape the world, flexibility, and empathy. Other skills and knowledge that are also included in the curriculum of higher education institutions include critical thinking, creativity, communication skills, and soft skills. Thus, the question of attaining these

skills and knowledge shifts attention to the practical implementations of higher education in colleges and universities, especially at technical colleges in Oman.

OAAA has developed Oman's Academic Standards. These standards are set up to help and guide the HEIs in meeting the set of minimum requirements a student should attain before entering a program. It has been reported that there is great evidence of both global and local cultures in the HEIs in Oman. Such studies reported findings that are similar to what other studies in similar substantial contexts have reported (Tuzlukova et al., 2019).

The University of Technology is overseen by the Ministry of Manpower. The aim of establishing Colleges of Technology is to provide technical education and to provide qualified labours for the labour market in Oman. The ministry established a general directorate in the ministry to supervise the implantation and development of technical programs to equip the graduates with the skills they need for the market. The directory oversees seven colleges scattered all over Oman. The colleges deliver 35 programs in engineering, information technology, applied sciences, business, pharmacy, and fashion design. The graduates can obtain a qualification of diploma, advance diploma, and bachelor's degree. The department of Academic Affairs in the Directorate General of Educational Technologies is responsible for reviewing and developing the curriculum in the seven colleges of technology. The department has three sections: foundation, specialization and follow-up, and academic auditing.

### **1.2.3 University of Technology and Applied Science-Salalah**

The college started as a vocational training centre in 1979, aiming at helping poor and low-income families to get jobs. The centre had around 89 students. Later in 1993, the vocational centres were upgraded to Salalah Institute of Technical Industry

and the later Salalah College of Technology (UTAS-Salalah) was one of these colleges. This boosted the number of students to 185 students during the upgrade period. In the year 2001, higher education had a huge reform. The strategical plan was to provide excellent education to cope with global demands. Thus, the MoMP renamed all Technical industrial institutes to colleges of technology. The college presently offers specialization in Business Studies, Engineering, and IT. According to the college web sites, the number of academic staff in UTAS-Salalah is 331, 36 administrative staff, and 4995 active students.

The graduate attributes of the college are aligned with the universal acceptance of the need to provide graduates with a wide range of skills. These skills are reported in almost all universities in the UK, the US, and Australia (Leask, 2015 p. 54). These skills include information management and technology, communication, problem-solving, and life-learning skills. The college has clearly stated the value, goals, and graduate attributes on the websites. Nonetheless, elements of internationalisation are not clearly specified as they should be modified (Leask, 2015a). For example, the college graduate attributes state are socially responsible citizens aware of contemporary issues in contributing to national development. Leask argued that this is opposed to “responsible global citizens.” Another argument is communication skills which can include “communication effectively in written and spoken English.” Leask comments such graduate attributes should be in an environment that is “culturally diverse and international.” The lack of emphasis is influenced by the institution’s ethos, the political and social climate in which the institution operates (Leask, 2015). The focus on graduate employability could result in diverse graduate attribute descriptions, as explained by Leask (2015). However, Leask interpreted some graduate attributes to have international perspectives. For example, she argued that graduate



attributes linked to work autonomously and collaboratively might mean working in a diverse team or culture. The same could be interpreted for UTAS-Salalah graduate attributes. For example, the UTAS-Salalah graduate attributes number clearly states a diverse and competitive environment.

After all, graduate attributes could differ from one university to another. However, linking them to the curriculum and embedding them in the formal, informal, or hidden curriculum is more important. These attributes make your graduates unique and differentiate them from the other graduates.

In Oman, all Colleges of Technology offer similar programs to students seeking undergraduate studies. The similarities among these programs in all Colleges of Technology are in terms of the program objectives, missions, and curriculums. The Directorate of Programs in the Ministry of Manpower in Oman supervises and monitors the progress of all programs in the Colleges of Technology. Taking these features into account, studying curriculum internationalisation, one college from all these colleges can offer findings that can be generalized to all Colleges of Technology. Hence, the current study's findings can apply to all Colleges of Technology in Oman.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Over the past few decades, there has been a significant increase in global connections and relationships that have had a profound impact on higher education worldwide. De Wit & Leask, (2017) asserts that the contemporary global landscape has compelled Higher Education institutions to undertake internationalisation measures in order to adapt to the evolving demands of the world. As a result, research on the topic of internationalisation has steadily expanded and produced noteworthy outcomes, thereby enhancing the internationalisation of the field of higher education.

The heightened emphasis on this matter has captured the interest of academics and scholars in the field of Higher Education, who recognise the significance of internationalisation of higher education (Tight, 2022). The vast majority of research on the Internationalisation of Higher Education is derived solely from developed nations. Numerous academics and prominent figures have emphasised the inescapable transformation of tertiary education. Knight (2004) notes that since the merging of the term "internationalisation" in the business domain, numerous universities have approached the concept of internationalisation through a business lens. The investigation of internationalisation studies in Higher Education within the Arab context has been found to be inadequate, as noted by Al-Zoubi and Abu-Orabi (2019), Alzadjali (2019), and Zayed (2020).

The phenomenon of internationalisation is predominantly observed at the macro level, wherein the participation of leaders and decision-makers in the field of higher education is considered crucial. Nonetheless, prior conceptual and empirical evaluations have faced censure for their inadequacy in addressing several pivotal elements in the discussion concerning internationalisation (H de Wit & Leask, 2015). The need for further research at the microlevels of internationalisation has been pointed out by some researchers, including recent published studies. with a focus on how internationalisation practices are applied in micro curriculum (Almeida et al., 2019). Sustainable internationalisation of curriculum necessitates examination at both the micro and macro levels. The evaluation of internationalisation at the micro-levels, specifically from the perspective of faculty members, is imperative as it enables a thorough examination of the production and implementation of internationalisation at this level. Conclusively, it is imperative to explore the concept of IoC from the standpoint of academic staff and evaluate their comprehension of the same.

Recently, the internationalisation of the curriculum has been a significant trend in higher education across the globe. The issue at hand has garnered the interest of scholars who are exploring a range of topics related to internationalisation, globalisation, higher education curriculum, and IoC (Tight, 2022). Currently, researchers are placing significant emphasis on investigating of IoC as a pertinent topic. Initial research on IoC has indicated that there is a lack of established guidelines for IoC due to its extensive nature, which extends beyond content and syllabi. Consequently, the current practises related to IoC can be regarded as fragmented practises (Jones & Killick, 2007; Beelen & Jones, 2015). The majority of studies on IoC has confirmed the need for further investigations, especially studies that explore faculty members' perceptions and practices of IoC.

The examination of prior research indicates a scarcity of scholarly works pertaining to this particular field of study within Arab nations, encompassing the context of higher education and curriculum in Oman. The research on the internationalisation of higher education is limited in newly developed countries, where the process of internationalisation is a recent phenomenon (Leask, 2015). Given that the fundamental definitions and conceptual frameworks of IoC have yet to be integrated into higher education institutions in Oman, there exists a necessity to conduct research and inquiry into the internationalisation of higher education within Arab nations at large, with a specific focus on Oman. According to Hans de Wit (2020), there is a widely held belief that internationalisation of higher education fosters the acquisition of knowledge and development of international skills among students, particularly in a globalised world.

The objective of this research is to examine and analyse the faculty staff's perception regarding the significance of internationalisation of the curriculum in higher education, specifically in the UTAS. Higher education institutions (HEIs) in Oman have been founded based on global and international education standards and frameworks. English has been chosen as the medium of instruction in all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) since their inception. Despite the limited evidence of internationalisation or global elements in higher education institutions (HEIs) as reported by Al'Abri (2016a), it has been suggested that the implementation of internationalisation of the curriculum (IoC) can enhance the graduate attributes, learning outcomes, and various aspects of the curriculum, including the formal, informal, and hidden components (Caruana & Leask, 2011; Hans De Wit & Leask, 2017; Leask, 2015).

A significant portion of the literature pertaining to Inversion of Control (IoC) has originated from various academic institutions across Europe, America, and Asia. Nonetheless, a conspicuous dearth of scholarly inquiry exists regarding the internationalisation of higher education in the Arab region, with a specific emphasis on Oman. No such studies focus on the specific topic in the Omani context.

This study tries to fill in the gap of Higher education internationalisation in Oman in general and Colleges of Technology in particular. The outcomes of this study could potentially furnish decision-makers and stakeholders with valuable insights for altering or adjusting internationalisation practises in Higher Education. Additionally, the study's outcomes are anticipated to contribute to the comprehension of internationalisation of higher education in other universities throughout Oman. It could potentially facilitate the provision of suggestions for modifications to the seven colleges of technology. Conducting a study on the perception of internationalisation in

higher education has the potential to provide insights into teaching and learning practises, as well as assessment strategies, within college settings. The research outcome will aid the stakeholders of UTAS-Salalah in addressing the curriculum challenges that arise in a globalised context.

The primary aim of this study utilising mixed methods is to enhance comprehension regarding the internationalisation of higher education in developing nations, with a specific focus on Oman. This is due to the dearth of empirical and theoretical research on the subject of higher education internationalisation in Oman. The primary objective of this study is to offer significant perspectives on the perception and implementation of curriculum internationalisation in Omani colleges. It is noteworthy that no prior research has been conducted in this area. The present study aims to investigate the perceptions of academic staff regarding the strategies employed for internationalising the curriculum across three levels, namely college, department, and course levels.

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

Specifically, the current study addresses the following five research objectives:

1. To measure academic staff's perceptions of curriculum internationalisation at the institutional level at UTAS-Salalah and how it differs according to years of experience in higher education, years of experience at UTAS-Salalah, and departments.
2. To examine academic staff's perceptions of curriculum internationalisation at the departmental level at UTAS-Salalah and how it differs according to years of experience in higher education, years of experience at UTAS-Salalah, and departments.

3. To investigate academic staff's perceptions of curriculum internationalisation at the course level at UTAS-Salalah and how it differs according to years of experience in higher education, years of experience at UTAS-Salalah, and departments.
4. To explore academic staff's perceptions of the three core levels (awareness, competence, and expertise) of curriculum internationalisation at UTAS-Salalah.
5. To identify challenges that academic staff encounter in the internationalisation of curriculum at UTAS-Salalah.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

Considering the aim of this study and the research questions, the study seeks to examine the view of the academics in relation to the following sub-research questions:

1. What are the academic staff's perceptions of curriculum internationalisation at the institutional level at UTAS-Salalah and how do academic staff's perceptions of curriculum internationalisation at the institutional level at UTAS-Salalah differ according to years of experience in higher education, years of experience at UTAS-Salalah, and departments?
2. What are the academic staff's perceptions of curriculum internationalisation at the departmental level at UTAS-Salalah and how do academic staff's perceptions of curriculum internationalisation at the departmental level at UTAS-Salalah differ according to years of experience

in higher education, years of experience at UTAS-Salalah, and departments?

3. What are the academic staff's perceptions of curriculum internationalisation at the course level at UTAS-Salalah and how do academic staff's perceptions of curriculum internationalisation at the course level at UTAS-Salalah differ according to years of experience in higher education, years of experience at UTAS-Salalah, and departments?

4. What are the academic staff's perceptions of the three core levels (awareness, competence, and expertise) of curriculum internationalisation at UTAS-Salalah?

5. What are the challenges encountered by academic staff to employ internationalisation of the curriculum at UTAS-Salalah?

## **1.6 Null Hypotheses**

In accordance with the procedure of this research, the null hypotheses can be stated as following:

### **1.6.1 Hypotheses for Research Question One**

H<sub>0</sub> There are no statistical differences in academic staff's perceptions of curriculum internationalisation at the institutional level at UTAS-Salalah according to years of experience in higher education.

H<sub>0</sub> There are no statistical differences in academic staff's perceptions of curriculum internationalisation at the institutional level at UTAS-Salalah according to years of experience at UTAS-Salalah.

H0 There are no statistical differences in academic staff's perceptions of curriculum internationalisation at the institutional level at UTAS-Salalah according to departments.

### **1.6.2 Hypotheses for Research Question Two**

H0 There are no statistical differences in academic staff's perceptions of curriculum internationalisation at the departmental level at UTAS-Salalah according to years of experience in higher education.

H0 There are no statistical differences in academic staff's perceptions of curriculum internationalisation at the departmental level at UTAS-Salalah according to years of experience at UTAS-Salalah.

H0 There are no statistical differences in academic staff's perceptions of curriculum internationalisation at the departmental level at UTAS-Salalah according to departments.

### **1.6.3 Hypotheses for Research Question Three**

H0 There are no statistical differences in academic staff's perceptions of curriculum internationalisation at the course level at UTAS-Salalah according to years of experience in higher education.

H0 There are no statistical differences in academic staff's perceptions of curriculum internationalisation at the course level at UTAS-Salalah according to years of experience at UTAS-Salalah.



H0 There are no statistical differences in academic staff's perceptions of curriculum internationalisation at the course level at UTAS-Salalah according to departments.

### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

Taking into account that there is a dearth of studies on internationalisation of curriculum in the Omani context, the findings of this study can offer valuable insights to researchers, policymakers, authorities in UTAS-Salalah, and teachers of course at this university. The significance of this mixed-methods study is to contribute to the understanding of the internationalisation of higher education studies in developing countries, particularly Oman, where there is a lack of empirical and theoretical research on higher education internationalisation. Specifically, the research provides valuable insights into how curriculum internationalisation of higher education is perceived and implemented in Oman colleges where no research has been conducted. This will not only help in exploring the perception of the academics but will also shed light on how the curriculum may be strengthened by incorporating new international elements. Data collection includes surveys, interviews, and analysis of documents on the institutional level. This can help an in-depth understanding of curriculum internationalisation at the institutional level.

The study's primary significance is understanding the curriculum internationalisation in colleges in Oman. The study's specific objectives are to review the literature to help build an understanding of Higher education internationalisation of the curriculum in higher education in general and in the Omani context, in particular. Another concern of this study is to explore the conceptual understandings, rationales, practices, strategies, challenges, and future priorities of Higher education

internationalisation of the curriculum in the colleges from the perspectives of their institutional academic stakeholders.

The significance of examining three different levels will shed light on the practical issues related to the implementation of IoC at the three levels. Moreover, it will provide important recommendations on the lack of IoC at three levels. The study seeks to obtain academic staff perceptions of various strategies for the internationalisation of curriculum at UTAS-Salalah. The study will also examine the academic staff' perception of the challenges of internalization of the curriculum at UTAS-Salalah. It is important to note that in the current study, internationalisation of the curriculum refers to a broad range of initiatives that encompass various diverse elements and activities that can include the infusion of content from various cultures, curricula in foreign languages, and curricula. These curricula specifically address training in cross-cultural and intercultural skills, curricula leading to joint or double degrees, and curricula aimed explicitly at international students (Schuerholz-Lehr et al., 1969).

Finally, this study is the first attempt to conceptualize curriculum internationalisation of higher education in the Omani context, a start to trace and develop curriculum internationalisation strategies in a developing country. More importantly, the study helps to contribute to the internationalisation of higher education in the Arab world, where a lack of research on internationalisation is pronounced.

## **1.8 Limitations and Delimitations**

Similar to other studies, the current study has some limitations which may be utilized by future researchers who have interest in understanding curriculum internationalisation. One of the limitations of this study is related to the sample of the study. As stated in the previous sections, the overall purpose of the study is the measurement of academic staff's perceptions of curriculum internationalisation at UTAS-Salalah. Hence, the study is limited to only the academic staff as the target sample of the study. In other words, the study did not include other stakeholders like students, decision-makers, and administrative staff.

Another limitation of the study has connection with the context of the study. The data which were used to obtain answers to the five research questions were collected from only one university which is UTAS-Salalah at Salalah. Due to time and financial resources, it was difficult for the researcher to cover more similar institutions in Oman. However, this does not prevent the findings to be cautiously generalized to other UTAS-Salalah institutions in Oman. Though all UTAS-Salalah have similar programs, there could be different findings when a number of institutions are covered in a similar study. Thus, the findings of the study are limited to UTAS-Salalah.

Another limitation could be related to understanding internationalisation in general. This may require studying all higher education institutions in Oman. The current study has intentionally focused on the institutional level, departmental level, and course level for the investigation of academic staff's perceptions of curriculum internalization. Thus, the study did not intend to analyse the policy of internationalisation at UTAS-Salalah because such a study may take may need in-depth policy document analysis. This particular issue is out of this study's scope.