

MANAGEMENT AND INTERNATIONALIZATION OF RESEARCH STRATEGIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AS A BASIS OF ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

Kimete Canaj^{*}, Artan Nimani^{**}, Blerim Canaj^{***}, Denis Spahija^{*}

^{*} University of Gjakova "Fehmi Agani", Gjakovë, the Republic of Kosovo

^{**} Corresponding author, University of Gjakova "Fehmi Agani", Gjakovë, the Republic of Kosovo

Contact details: University of Gjakova "Fehmi Agani", Str. Ismail Qemali, n.n., 50 000 Gjakovë, the Republic of Kosovo

^{***} University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria



Abstract

How to cite this paper: Canaj, K., Nimani, A., Canaj, B., & Spahija, D. (2022). Management and internationalization of research strategies in higher education institutions as a basis of economic well-being [Special issue]. *Corporate & Business Strategy Review*, 3(2), 221–229.
<https://doi.org/10.22495/cbsrv3i2siart3>

Copyright © 2022 The Authors

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0).
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

ISSN Online: 2708-4965

ISSN Print: 2708-9924

Received: 16.05.2022

Accepted: 11.11.2022

JEL Classification: E02, E20, I20, I23, I26

DOI: 10.22495/cbsrv3i2siart3

Research and internationalization are the major difficulties confronting most higher education institutions (HEIs) in the region, putting research, innovation, internationalization, and economic and political strain on policymakers. This study is a qualitative and quantitative empirical research of two projects that examines their dominant perceptions and attitudes towards social mobility and internationalization of research strategies in HEIs as a basis of social and economic well-being. The research was conducted at the University of Gjakova "Fehmi Agani" (UFAGJ), through personal interviews and a structured questionnaire, which was carried out by management, academic staff, administrative staff, and students. The results demonstrated that the internationalization of research has a high impact on the increase of the economy and well-being in society. This research presents an analysis of the internationalization strategies employed by the HEIs through two selected projects involving different European and South East European universities. The study is based on a literature review (Almeida, Robson, Morosini, & Baranzeli, 2018; Dewey & Duff, 2009; Levatino, 2017) and the establishment of categories as points of reference and comparison. We look at and compare internationalization strategy focused on international staff and student mobility and internationalization at home (IaH) actions focused on the development of high-quality lectures and sensitive intercultural competencies in students as learning outcomes and strategic goals. Finally, in addition to an *ex-post* analysis of the ongoing implementation of the internationalization strategy at the UFAGJ, we draw conclusions and lessons learnt for the internationalization and quality of research within HEIs of an emerging economy.

Keywords: Internationalization in Higher Education, Research at HEIs, Innovation Capacities, HEIs in Kosovo, Research Culture at HEIs, Barriers to International Education

Authors' individual contribution: Conceptualisation — K.C. and A.N.; Methodology — K.C., A.N., and B.C.; Formal Analysis — A.N., B.C., and D.S.; Investigation — K.C., A.N., and D.S.; Resources — K.C., B.C., and D.S.; Writing — Original Draft — K.C., A.N., and B.C.; Supervision — K.C. and A.N.

Declaration of conflicting interests: The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper will present the case study from two projects, ResearchCult¹ and Drive², which supported the University of Gjakova “Fehmi Agani” (UFAGJ)³ in the field of internationalization and research as a basis of economic well-being.

At higher education institutions (HEIs), the importance of internationalization, intercultural competence, and research has increased. The demand for postsecondary degrees with a strong international component is rising among both students and employers. This is true of both the curriculum’s content and the students’ exposure to various cultures that contribute to the development of intercultural skills, knowledge, and competencies. Although the most visible features of internationalization and fusion of tertiary education institutions with globally recognized frameworks are academic and faculty/student mobility (Atzori, 2017; Casanovas, 2015).

In addition, tertiary educational institutions frequently use these new international engagement strategies as platforms for other activities including marketing, recruiting international students, collaborating on research projects, and establishing research partnerships. To further support students’ development of an international and global perspective, UFAGJ increasingly incorporates intercultural and international components in its curricula, teaching, research, and extracurricular activities (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021).

In recent years, HEIs have been adopting increasingly internationalization strategies, policies, and practices in order to gain an advantage in the market. In Kosovo, the concept of internationalization is new and related to the European Union (EU) based on the concept of Armache, Ismail, and Armache (2020), Pastore (2018), and the OECD (2021). In 2020, the OECD predicts that the use of blockchain technology will continue to grow in popularity. This will be especially true in the area of business transactions, where it will be used to automate processes and reduce costs. In 2021, the OECD expects that this technology will be well-established and used throughout many industries. The field of internationalization is in its early stages, and much research is still being conducted on the constantly changing role of HEIs in their social, regional, and global contexts. The EU’s internationalization strategy emphasises the need for HEIs to adjust their approach to internationalization to take into account their unique circumstances. This is because HEIs have a strong role in managing their social impact based on a formal perspective that is different from other types of institutions. The present study aimed to learn more about the familiarity of Kosovo’s HEIs with the concept of internationalization and research, their engagement in HEIs’ policies and practices, their awareness of the effects of

international practices, and the reasons for and limitations to participating in international projects and awarding degrees from other countries. The findings will help all the parties engaged in the decision-making process by serving as the basis for international awareness and international strategy implementation by the UFAGJ (Knight, 2003; Kaufmann, Bergman, & Joye, 2004; Igarashi & Saito, 2014).

The HEIs of two particular projects, in which different EU and regional partners are participating and which are located in different OECD nations, are analyzed in this research for their internationalization initiatives. The study is founded on a review of the literature and the creation of categories that serve as points of comparison and reference. We examine and contrast internationalization strategies that are centered on international student mobility with internationalization at home (IaH) initiatives that are centered on helping students build their foreign language and intercultural competence as strategic objectives and learning outcomes. Finally, we draw conclusions and lessons learned regarding the internationalization strategies and policies of education within HEIs of a growing economy.

The UFAGJ is an applied university that works to create an effective higher education system that will improve the well-being of Kosovan society by providing top-notch instruction and research opportunities with fair opportunities for everyone in accordance with the region’s values of freedom, democracy, and diversity. Internationalization and globalization of education are a priority for the new generation (Petzold & Peter, 2015; Mitchell & Nielsen, 2012; Grove, Clouse, & Xu, 2019). Herewith we will discuss the qualitative methods used by Levatino (2017), Robson (2011), Robson, Almeida, and Schartner (2018).

Internationalization and research at the UFAGJ have been facing unprecedented challenges with the COVID-19 pandemic in the last years, through economic recession, cancellation of travelling and face-to-face scientific events, and the impossibility to access research facilities has put a strain on non-COVID-19 related research. Similarly, internationalization which was heavily linked to the physical mobility of students and scholars has been significantly impacted. However, while this crisis has generated a lot of challenges, it has also created opportunities for the UFAGJ to innovate and come up with new hybrid or blended learning models for engaging in research and internationalization (Albach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009; Bühlmann, Davoine, & Ravasi, 2018; Beelen & Jones, 2015). The pandemic has transformed the way the UFAGJ engaged the faculty and students in innovation, research, and internationalization.

Herewith the UFAGJ is involved as a partner in research and internationalization, which improved the research culture and developed research and innovation capacities at the UFAGJ.

The UFAGJ is integrated and at the same time operates according to the principle of trust, cooperation, and connection in various disciplines national and international has freedom of research and teaching based on the Higher Education Law and Statute of the University. This Law serves as the framework for governing the quality of higher education in the Republic of Kosovo in accordance

¹ Erasmus+ Project “Enhancing Research Culture in Higher Education Institutions in Kosovo (ResearchCult)” — CBHE-Project Nr. 610000-EPP-1-2019-1-XK-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP (2019-1992/001-001), <https://www.ibcmetrovica.eu/researchcult-2/>

² Developing Research and Innovation Capacities in Albania and Kosovo — CBHE-Project Nr. 610307-EPP-1-2019-1-AL-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP, <https://driveproject-eu.com/>

³ UFAGJ — Applied Science University — is founded in December 2013 with the applied science profile as public university with special fields on Medicine, Education, Philology, Social Sciences and Applied Sciences, <http://uni-gjk.org/en>

with European standards as well as the state's and society's contributions to its growth.

The UFAGJ⁴ provides a variety of quality programs to support learning, teaching, and research and provides creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship as the primary objectives of the courses, study programs, and, in general, of HEIs.

Based on the Higher Education Law and Statute of the UFAGJ, the university recognizes the European standards of higher education and commits to research and innovation in all areas of higher education, as well as an international orientation, by ensuring student and staff mobility and comparability of diplomas and qualifications, fully supporting the research and scholarship initiatives to support teaching and learning, and expanding the frontiers of knowledge and understanding in and around Kosovo (OECD, 2021).

The UFAGJ is a member of Magna Charta. Member of the European University Association (EUA), American Council of Education (ACE), Danube Rectors Conference (DRC), Mediterranean Universities Union (UNIMED) and has many partnership agreements with different universities in the world, which supports the UFAGJ in the internationalization process.

As a result of internationalisation and staff mobility, these projects are new programs with a high impact on society and economic well-being which plays a crucial role in growing the mindset towards openness to other cultures, languages, and new technology.

The structure of this paper is as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature. Section 3 analyses the methodology that has been used to conduct empirical research on internationalization projects at the HEIs which plays a crucial role in the change of mindset and economic well-being. Section 4 presents the results of the study. Section 5 provides reflections and recommendations on improving the internationalization and research strategy at the UFAGJ. Section 6 concludes the paper.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the postmodern society based on knowledge, globalization, and digitalization, internationalization and research have a significant impact (Altbach et al., 2009). No matter what, the paradigms of teaching, learning, education, research, and its results remain important topics, which idea becomes effective over time, as demonstrated by Illeris (2009). What might be based on this material and used as the foundation for the investigation detailed in this almost of learning is social (Jarvis, 2009), hence communication is important.

Depending on the social, unique, and temporal context, the way you organize it may change. Otherwise, this research addresses the linking of internationalization with research and development of new culture to match the knowledge with innovation at the UFAGJ and the impact of two projects in the internationalization and research of

the UFAGJ. This initiative is taken due to the less connection of the university with industry, economy, and society. The university is oriented on teaching and the research at the level of the University or Government is left behind based on the last Kosovo 2021 Report (European Commission, 2021, p. 90).

Furthermore, there is general agreement that it is crucial for students to acquire the skills necessary to survive in an increasingly global environment (Soria & Troisi, 2014). In this context, Jarvis (2009) believes that the ability to perform is more appreciated than doing something well or being an expert, making the relevance and pertinence of competencies crucial in today's knowledge-based society.

Kosovo is in the early stages of preparation in the field of science and research. There has been limited progress during the reporting period. Kosovo continued to improve its performance under Horizon 2020 as an associated partner. Given the inadequate consideration of the recommendations of the previous report, Kosovo should in particular: "develop a strategic approach to the development, prioritisation and promotion of scientific research and innovation and ensure higher government spending on research, seek to stimulate investment from the private sector by completing a Smart Specialisation Strategy; continue efforts to increase participation in the EU's Horizon Europe programme; provide statistical data on numbers of researchers, percentage of GDP spent on research and innovation, and performance related to the European Research Area priorities" (European Commission, 2021, p. 91).

The UFAGJ has adopted the Strategic Plan 2021-2025 with Objective 4: Internationalization, and Networking (University of Gjakova "Fehmi Agani" [UFAGJ], 2020a, p. 25) but the implementation is going very slowly due to a lack of funding and professional support. The study is based on analysis and processual perspective on Kosovan students' mobility based on reason before passion and world-class internationalization students (Carlson, 2013; Dewey & Duff, 2009; Findlay, King, Smith, Geddes, & Skeldon, 2012; Hall & Appleyard, 2011; Pastore, 2019; Armache et al., 2020).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research undertaken for this study was carried out in three phases. The first phase which was done in December 2021 was the collection and analysis of the basic literature on internationalization and research and all documents produced from these two projects and other measurement instruments in research, innovation, and internationalization in higher education. The second phase was based on qualitative research in the form of semi-structured interviews carried out in January 2022. A total of 10 interviews were carried out and recorded. The questions posed were modeled on questions put in the past and current versions of ReserchCult and Drive, reports, which the EU uses for its annual stocktaking exercise on the implementation of internationalization and research strategy. Equal weighting was also given to the local context of quality education on HEIs in Kosovo and the local context of political reality. Leadership and management, teaching and administrative staff, and the students of the UFAGJ participated in the interview.

⁴ The UFAGJ works hard on quality and on research, all faculties are motivated in the field of teaching and research. The organizational units where the scientific research activity takes place are the faculties, institutes and research centres. There are currently five faculties (Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Philology, Faculty of Social Science and Faculty of Applied Science), one institute (Institute for Environment and Health), and two research centres (Didactic Centre for Excellence in Teaching and University Centre for Psychosocial Counselling) at the UFAGJ.

The rationale behind the choice of such interviews was twofold. One of the key aims is to obtain a full understanding of the context in which the UFAGJ has operated since the projects are approved and to implement the internationalization and research strategy. The second aim was to do justice to the participatory nature of the EU program, Erasmus+, seeking to include all partners in the higher education community. Ideally, this interview would have also representatives from industry and municipality, research institutes, representatives of employers' associations, or from the Ministry dealing with employment, however, education, research, and employment are currently disconnected policy areas in Kosovo, and such an interview was not possible.

The last phase of this research comprised the collection of further literature and documentation relevant to the implementation of the internationalization and research strategy at the UFAGJ, additional follow-up with some of the interviews, analysis of the material at hand, and writing up the results and the recommendation for future steps.

The UFAGJ is working on a plan for establishing an innovation center at the level of the university and developing all working legislation and commitment to funding research and innovation in the Dukagjini Region. The documents which are developed from these two projects are:

- Research Ethics and Integrity Guidelines;
- Terms of reference for establishing/functioning of research ethics committees (REC);
- Gender Balance in Research and Innovation;
- Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics (UFAGJ, 2022).

A number of documents were approved by the new applied university to boost internationalization, innovation, and research.

In order to complete this research, we have analyzed all legal documents of the UFAGJ:

- Strategy Plan 2021–2025, adopted in December 2020 (UFAGJ, 2020a);
- Strategy of the University “Fehmi Agani” of Gjakova for Internationalization 2020–2025, adopted on May 8, 2020 (UFAGJ, 2020b);
- Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics (UFAGJ, 2022);
- Science council documents⁵;
- Baseline Assessment for Institutional Capacity Development (UFAGJ, 2021a);
- Regulation on Internationalization and Mobility (UFAGJ, 2019);
- Regulation on Scientific — Research Activity (UFAGJ, 2020c);
- Code of Ethics at the University of Gjakova “Fehmi Agani”, adopted on June 30, 2021 (UFAGJ, 2021b);
- Regulation on Publication at the University of Gjakova “Fehmi Agani”, adopted on July 13, 2015 (UFAGJ, 2015);
- Innovation and Entrepreneurship Board⁶;
- Ethics Council⁷;
- Regulations for the International Summer University (UFAGJ, 2020d);
- Journal of Social Education and Interdisciplinary Science (JSEIS)⁸.

The Office for Scientific Research and Project Management was established on October 9, 2019, according to the new management's directive, which aims to involve the UFAGJ in as many academic and scientific development projects as possible within the framework of European higher education projects, projects that overall enable the development of academic staff's, professors' and students' mobility, the application of European quality standards, the organization of joint scientific conferences, and the transfer and adaptation of pedagogical methods by internationally renowned authors, improving teaching and research facilities, etc.

We can say that internationalization and research will have a high impact on globalization and increase the employment rate of the young generation.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Research culture and innovation in the Dukagjini region: ResearchCult and Drive

Kosovo's research and innovation policy in higher education, in general, is still in its infancy. A strategic approach to developing, prioritizing, and promoting research and innovation activities is lacking. The legal framework, namely the Law on Scientific Research Activities and the Law on Scientific Innovation, Transfer, and Technology, lacks efficient implementation. From higher goals to wage workers.

Based on the research of Knight (2003), Koulouriotis (2011), Herschberg, Benschop, and van den Brink (2018), and Levatino (2017), internationalization of research and as well as working with international partners and taking advantage of available grants for research and program partners will have a significant impact on economic well-being. In November 2020, Kosovo joined the GÉANT research infrastructure but only the infrastructure is in place and is still being worked on. Work is underway to set up a Kosovo researcher registry and collect statistics on research and development, including in HEIs. The Smart Specialization Strategy (S3) has been in development since 2019. A thematic analysis was conducted to identify scientific priorities. The new online platform will serve as a communication platform between stakeholders. The sector remains underfunded with public research spending at just 0.01% of GDP, despite a statutory of 0.7%. An increase in the budget in this sector will boost economic recovery given the relevance of innovation to economic investment plans in the Western Balkans.

The quality of programs that prepare graduate students for research careers remains unsatisfactory. Integration into the European Research Area has not progressed. Kosovo needs to provide reliable statistics to monitor progress in this area. Otherwise, both projects are added value to the research and innovation strategy of the UFAGJ and support the management and academic staff with the equipment which will be used not just for the project needs but for the new programs based on the community needs and the economic well-being.

⁵ <https://uni-gjk.org/en/faqe/154/keshilli-per-shkence>

⁶ <https://uni-gjk.org/en/faqe/85/bordi-per-inovacion-dhe-ndermarresi>

⁷ <https://uni-gjk.org/en/sc/keshilli-i-etikes/47>

⁸ <https://jseis.uni-gjk.org/index.php/jseis>

4.2. ResearchCult

The overall goal of the ResearchCult project is to help improve the research culture in Kosovo's HEIs. This is achieved by helping the UFAGJ improve existing policies and practices as well as establish and introduce new regulations and mechanisms as follows:

- Assessment of the current state of research capacity in Kosovo's higher education sector.
- Strengthen research stimulation and support through the establishment of a University Innovation Center and a strategic plan to support ongoing research activities at the UFAGJ.
- Improve the university's strategy for publishing scientific research by developing and endorsing standards for internationally recognized scientific journals and establishing inter-institutional scientific journals in Kosovo's key research priorities.
- Promoting research activities through annual joint research meetings (joint conferences).
- Improving the quality and standards of research through the development of research ethics and integrity rules and the establishment of research ethics committees in HEIs.
- Facilitate regular access to research publications and establish open-access online platforms/databases for collecting research knowledge; Clarivate, Scopus, and EBSCO.
- Increase opportunities for publication of research results by building the capacity of researchers to produce research papers in accordance with international standards and requirements for publication of research papers.

4.3. Drive

The Drive project aims to develop the capacity of Albania and Kosovo universities to improve their research and innovation performance. In addition to traditional training activities such as workshops and research visits, the project will focus on research and innovation with an interdisciplinary approach, ending with four HEIs in line with close cooperation with corporate and industrial partners. It envisions establishing a new structure for the institution, a quadruple helix goal.

Furthermore, the university's openness to other local and international partners will be further enhanced through the development of a network supported by a virtual platform that fosters interaction and synergy among its members (Waters, Brooks, & Pimlott-Wilson, 2011; Waters, 2012; Weenink, 2007, 2008).

Dedicated research and innovation offices or networks for such purposes may be underdeveloped and nothing new for developed countries. Collaboration, coordination, and synergy are rare and the project results represent a novelty.

4.4. The goals and outcomes intended to be achieved by the UFAGJ through these projects

The UFAGJ has already established a number of partnerships and supports from relevant academic and non-academic partners in order to gain better experience in building a university, a better understanding of the conditions and circumstances and other academic institutions in the country and

region in order to improve the working conditions at the UFAGJ, even to better channel and organize the work towards the internationalization which opens perspectives and increase the quality of the UFAGJ and social well-being in society. The Steering Council of the university with decision 05/523, dated May 8, 2020, has also approved the UFAGJ strategy for internationalization in the period 2020-2025, which corresponds approximately with the period of this strategy that enables cohesion between strategic documents and consequently the actions arising from these documents. Also, a success of the UFAGJ is the establishment of a Center of Excellence in teaching which increases the importance of the university and the interest of students in it. The university has established also Industrial Boards for all Faculties to work together with Faculty Members in Curriculum Development and entered into partnerships with businesses inside and outside the country for internships and the accommodation of students in the labor market after graduation through the Career Center.

Mobility at the UFAGJ needs to be increased. One challenge that remains to be addressed with this strategy is the diversification of exchange programs that create a wide variety of opportunities. Although there is now satisfactory mobility in number compared to the previous period, the challenge remains to diversify the exchange programs as much as possible that contributes more to the exchange of more diverse programs of academic staff and students according to adequate needs of the university but also of global trends. The UFAGJ has issued an internal regulation on practical work (No. 05/1637, dated November 23, 2020) well organized and structured for the realization of practical work for students in specialized educational and health institutions, however, the lack of a genuine and encouraging government policy for students for internships and research at home and abroad in their respective profiles challenges attempts in this direction. Internationalization and networking allow the promotion of the UFAGJ, which can contribute also in other areas. Through internationalization and networking, the UFAGJ as a relatively young institution seeks to gain and exchange experience and create opportunities for the exchange of academic staff and students through various academic and student exchange programs. Furthermore, the engagement of students in different companies and internship positions opens opportunities for the UFAGJ to increase partnerships with other new partners. The UFAGJ as a relatively young institution sees as a challenge the partnership with large companies and reputable in the respective areas covered by the UFAGJ, which are:

Strengths:

- building partnerships with other local and foreign universities;
- good practices — center for new products development and patenting;
- internships with different healthcare centers and hospitals in the region and globally;
- establishing partnerships with local and foreign businesses;
- strong capacity and participation in Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe;
- increase diversity as wide as possible of exchange programs.

Challenges:

- establishing Innovation Center at the UFAGJ;
- increase diversity as wide as possible of exchange programs;
 - the need for an internship with SMEs and industry locally, regionally, and globally;
 - lack of proper government policies to promote research for staff and internship and innovation for students.

The UFAGJ has 26 university partnerships as reliable and stable partners for longer-term and strategic periods. All this is for the high-quality and long-term planning of the university itself. The establishment of the Center of Excellence and its functioning is an excellent opportunity for the UFAGJ, but at the same time, it means additional work and commitment for the management and its staff for their proper functioning. This may require additional resources to address needs, establish these departments, and also focus on external affairs and partnerships while focusing on internal consolidation partners (Beelen & Jones, 2015):

- providing the necessary conditions for studies and research for students;
- building partnerships with the community and economic partners;
- involvement of students in decision-making;
- scholarships and financial support for elite students;
- students support for mobility;
- students research;
- alumni and securing funds;
- increasing the visibility of the university to economic partners and attracting attention to diverse collaborations.

Top career students will get the best career position in society based on networks and trust-building through studying time at different universities (Findlay et al., 2012; Bühlmann et al., 2018; Carlson, 2013).

5. REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON IMPROVING THE INTERNATIONALIZATION AND RESEARCH STRATEGY AT THE UFAGJ

Below are suggested recommendations for improved implementation of two key areas of internationalization strategy (mobility of staff and

mobility of students) and research. As far as the mobility of students and staff is concerned, feedback obtained during this study indicates that the university is planning to start preparing to offer 30% of courses in English to attract students from abroad. It is further discussed and recommended that the university not only consider English to be the main language tool for incoming mobility but also other languages relevant to the countries where the university undertakes much of its cooperation, including Germany and Austria, the USA, Israel, France, etc., and therefore the use of German and later other languages.

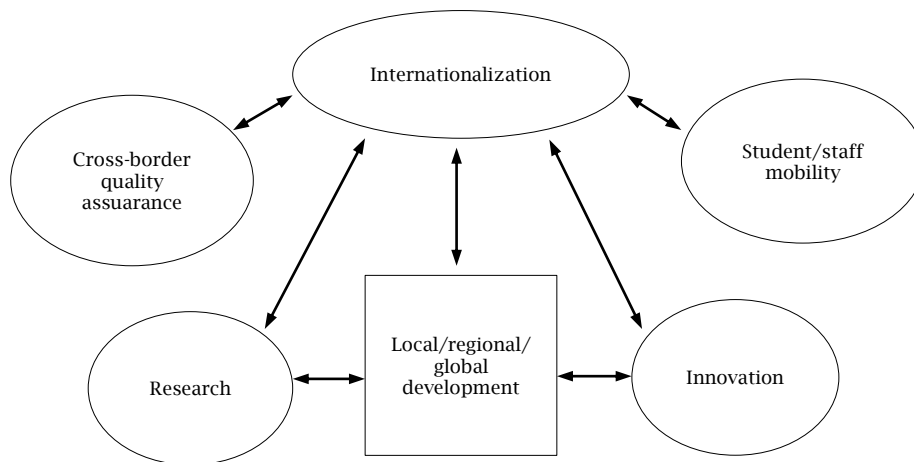
As a long-term goal, because of a potential strategy for the university as recommended, the UFAGJ could also consider aiming to develop as a pioneer university in the region in the instruction of languages, because of the broad scope of its Faculty of Philology, also via the possible use of a regular inflow of visiting professors in light of its extensive efforts for cross-border collaboration.

The Code of Ethics makes absolutely clear that all members of the university staff are committed to objectivity and independence, and are responsible and accountable for their work in their capacity.

When it comes to lifelong learning, Kosovo is in the early stages of preparation in the field of science and research. There has been limited progress during the EU reporting period. Kosovo continued to improve its performance in Horizon Europe as an associated partner.

The framework program was associated with Horizon Europe from December 2021. Kosovo's institutions have participated 20 times in Horizon 2020 in 18 Horizon 2020 cooperation actions, 1 Maria Sklodowska-Curie action, and European Research Council receiving 2.5 million euros in 2019 was Kosovo's best year of participation, with a success rate of 20.04%, that is well above the Horizon 2020 overall average of 12%, but its performance could be even better. Kosovo participates in the European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST). This allows researchers to easily participate in research and innovation conferences across Europe.

Figure 1. The role of internationalization in local/regional/global development and economic well-being



The UFAGJ should increase the supply of quality of vocational education and training for high-demand occupations. The necessary steps will be taken to set up and implement the Youth Guarantee by creating a Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan in line with the EU model and guidelines.

6. CONCLUSION

Lessons learnt from both projects: the UFAGJ should also consider internationalization, lifelong learning, research, and innovation more interactively. For example, HEIs in the future will invest in research and innovation and involve traditional students, young students and lifelong learners which are already in the workforce, Kosovo could truly be called a learning society. Kosovo has the youngest population in Europe, but the most isolated youth in the region and Europe, so this is a big step forward for HEIs to support the internationalization and mobility of students and staff through different incentives.

This would be a major step forward that our institution should support internationalization through research and innovation projects as Kosovo has the youngest population in Europe (Canaj, 2020; 2021; Beelen & Jones, 2015; Atzori, 2017).

In the era of globalization, internationalization and digitalization have received widespread attention in academic institutions around the world (Almeida et al., 2018). Faculty members inevitably play a key role in initiatives to internationalize academia, yet surprisingly little published research addresses the roles, responsibilities, and issues facing faculty members at the operational level of internationalization processes. A thorough critical analysis of the case leads to recommendations and frameworks for navigating the various tensions and responsibilities inherent in the need for internationalization. In our global age, while actively seeking to understand cultural norms and expectations of others and using this acquired knowledge to interact, communicate, and work effectively outside one's environment. And we need open-minded competent and gender-sensitive citizens (Canaj, 2021; Nerantzidis, Filos, & Lazarides, 2012; Pitoska, Giannakis, & Sdraka, 2018).

This paper is significant for future research because it shows how internationalization, research, and networking foster creativity and higher standards of study, which have a direct bearing on societal quality and economic well-being. The results of the empirical research show that: 1) internationalization supports research and improvement of innovation; 2) internationalization supports quality and acknowledgment of research; 3) internationalization supports teaching, research, and learning integrated approach.

In fact, the research that is now available on internationalization in higher education shows the growing significance of internationalization as a key problem (Altbach, 1999). Altbach et al. (2009) debate, "that now academy has regained its international scope and direction, information technology, the knowledge economy, increased mobility for students, faculty, programs, and providers. Internationalization will remain a central force in higher education, though its contours are unclear" (p. 15).

Mitchell and Nielsen (2012) argue that the most important issue of global education is the internationalization of teaching, learning, and research and as individual and institutional responsibility in leading an internationalization imperative and making Kosovo of knowledge, which is still a challenge⁹ in isolation context of Kosovo (Canaj, 2020).

The results of this study suggest that about half of the jobs as we know them today can be expected to disappear over the next decade as part of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. We are living through the changes we anticipated when we created, and the need for lifelong learning and innovation is even greater today (Robson et al., 2018; Waters et al., 2011).

It is important to note that today's rapidly evolving labor market has the potential for greater change through the COVID-19 pandemic than the global economic crisis of 2008. So, this strategy is very relevant in today's educational environment. However, the execution was not outstanding.

We also need to look at lifelong learning, research, innovation, and internationalization in a more integrated way. This is a huge step forward that Kosovo's HEIs and Kosovo's government should follow and support. On the digital frontier, there are many opportunities for lifelong learning both in the classroom and in non-traditional ways (Dewey & Duff, 2009; Herschberg et al., 2018; Khurana, 2007). We have Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and mobile learning, all of which have gained momentum over the years.

Kosovo has promoted the internationalization of higher education and has implemented an international education policy since 2000 (Altbach et al., 2009). This was a movement to learn western knowledge and technology to make Kosovo stronger (European Commission, 2019), to enter into global universities, and to shape its international reputation. However, the internationalization of Kosovan universities, described in the self-assessment report of the UFAGJ as higher education based on Western experiences (Almeida et al., 2018) reflected in the fact and goal that English is a compulsory subject for all university students. The percentage of Kosovan students choosing to study in developed countries such as Germany, France, the USA, the UK, Australia, Canada, etc. (Huan, Purbhai-Illich, Martin, & Wu, 2020) is where they see Kosovo as brain gain potential for development and well-being of Kosovan society (Hall & Appleyard, 2011). This has led to a desire to engage academically with the West in order to positively influence Kosovo's image abroad (Altbach et al., 2009). Unlike most Western countries, which are motivated by economic and political considerations, Kosovo's initial motivations for the internationalization of higher education were sociocultural and academic. Countries have left universities to develop their own strategies. However, economic motives have dominated over the past decade, as evidenced by the 2014 National Strategy's emphasis on international students as a source of income (Dewey & Duff, 2009).

⁹ Kosovo is the last country in Balkan without visa liberalization.

As limitation of this research is that the UFAGJ is a small and new university which is a good example for internationalization but cannot be as general good example comparing with outcomes of other HEIs in the region or global.

This paper is important for future research because networking and internationalization support innovation and higher quality of research which has a direct impact on the quality and economic well-being of society.

REFERENCES

- Almeida, J., Robson, S., Morosini, M., & Baranzeli, C. (2018). Understanding internationalization at home: Perspectives from the Global North and South. *European Educational Research Journal*, 18(2), 200-217. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474904118807537>
- Altbach, P. G. (1999). Private higher education: Themes and variations in comparative perspective. *Prospects*, 29(3), 310-323. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02736957>
- Altbach, P. G., Reisberg, L., & Rumbley, L. E. (2009). *Trends in global higher education: Tracking an academic revolution* (Global Perspectives on Higher Education, Vol. 22). <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004406155>
- Armache, J., Ismail, H., & Armache, G. D. (2020). The US university governance: Challenges and opportunities for the board of directors. *Corporate Ownership & Control*, 17(4), 51-59. <https://doi.org/10.22495/cocv17i4art4>
- Atzori, M. (2017). Blockchain technology and decentralized governance: Is the state still necessary? *Journal of Governance and Regulation*, 6(1), 45-62. https://doi.org/10.22495/jgr_v6_i1_p5
- Beelen, J., & Jones, E. (2015). Redefining internationalization at home. In A. Curaj, L. Matei, R. Pricopie, J. Salmi, & P. Scott (Eds.), *The European higher education area: Between critical reflections and future policies* (pp. 59-72). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-20877-0_5
- Bühlmann, F., Davoine, E., & Ravasi, C. (2018). European top management careers: A field-analytical approach. *European Societies*, 20(3), 453-477. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2017.1371314>
- Canaj, K. (2020). Language policy and language planning in Kosova. *International Institute of Social and Economy Sciences*, 8(2), 35-52. <https://doi.org/10.20472/TE.2020.8.2.003>
- Canaj, K. (2021). Gender equality policies and gender mindset in Kosovo. *International Institute of Social and Economic Sciences*, 10(1), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.52950/SS.2021.10.1.001>
- Carlson, S. (2013). Becoming a mobile student — A processual perspective on German degree student mobility. *Population, Space and Place*, 19(2), 168-180. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.1749>
- Casanovas, P. (2015). Conceptualisation of rights and meta-rule of law for the web of data. *Journal of Governance and Regulation*, 4(4), 118-130. https://doi.org/10.22495/jgr_v4_i1_p11
- Dewey, P., & Duff, S. (2009). Reason before passion: Faculty views on internationalisation in higher education. *Higher Education*, 58(4), 491-504. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-009-9207-z>
- European Commission. (2019). *Kosovo 2019 report*. Retrieved from <https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2019-05/20190529-kosovo-report.pdf>
- European Commission. (2021). *Kosovo 2021 report*. Retrieved from https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/kosovo-report-2021_en
- Findlay, A., King, R., Smith, F. M., Geddes, A., & Skeldon, R. (2012). World class? An investigation of globalisation, difference and international student mobility. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 31(1), 118-131. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-5661.2011.00454.x>
- Grove, H., Clouse, M., & Xu, T. (2019). Strategies for boards of directors to meet the challenges associated with AI, gentrification, and emerging technological advances. *Corporate Ownership & Control*, 17(1), 38-49. <https://doi.org/10.22495/cocv17i1art4>
- Hall, S., & Appleyard, L. (2011). Trans-local academic credentials and the (re)production of financial elites. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 9(2), 247-264. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2011.577177>
- Herschberg, C., Benschop, Y., & van den Brink, M. (2018). Selecting early-career researchers: the influence of discourses of internationalisation and excellence on formal and applied selection criteria in academia. *Higher Education*, 76(5), 807-825. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-018-0237-2>
- Huan, Z., Pirbhai-Illich, F., Martin, F., & Wu, L. (2020). Internationalisation of higher education: A critical analysis of the intercultural dimension of a visiting scholar programme. *British Educational Research Journal*, 46(6), 1371-1390. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3637>
- Igarashi, H., & Saito, H. (2014). Cosmopolitanism as cultural capital: Exploring the intersection of globalization, education and stratification. *Cultural Sociology*, 8(3), 222-239. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975514523935>
- Illeris, K. (2018). *Contemporary theories of learning: Learning theorists... in their own words* (2nd ed.). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315147277>
- Jarvis, P. (2009). Learning to be a person in society: Learning to be me. In K. Illeris (Ed.), *Contemporary theories of learning* (pp. 21-34). Routledge. Retrieved from https://people.bath.ac.uk/edspd/Weblinks/MA_ULL/Resources/General/Illeris%202009%20Contemporary%20Theories%20of%20Learning.pdf
- Kaufmann, V., Bergman, M. M., & Joye, D. (2004). Motility: Mobility as capital. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 28(4), 745-756. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0309-1317.2004.00549.x>
- Khan, S. R. (2011). *Privilege: The making of an adolescent elite at St. Paul's School*. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400836222>
- Khurana, R. (2007). *From higher aims to hired hands: The social transformation of American business schools and the unfulfilled promise of management as a profession*. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400830862>
- Knight, J. (2003). *Internationalisation of higher education. Practices and priorities: 2003 IAU survey report*. International Association of Universities. Retrieved from https://www.iau-aiu.net/IMG/pdf/internationalisation_2003_0.pdf
- Koulouriotis, J. (2011). Ethical considerations in conducting research with non-native speakers of English. *TESL Canada Journal*, 28(5), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.18806/tesl.v28i0.1078>
- Levatino, A. (2017). Transnational higher education and international student mobility: Determinants and linkage. *Higher Education*, 73, 637-653. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-016-9985-z>

29. Mitchell, D. E., & Nielsen, Y. S. (2012). Internationalization and globalization in higher education. In H. Cuadra-Montiel (Ed.), *Globalization: Education and management agendas*. <https://doi.org/10.5772/48702>
30. Nerantzidis, M., Filos, J., & Lazarides, T. (2012). The puzzle of corporate governance definition(s): A content analysis. *Corporate Board: Role, Duties and Composition*, 8(2), 15–23. <https://doi.org/10.22495/cbv8i2art2>
31. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2021). *Education at a glance 2022: OECD indicators*. <https://doi.org/10.1787/b35a14e5-en>
32. Pastore, P. (2018). Italian lesson about getting women on the board five years after the implementation of the gender quota law. *Corporate Ownership & Control*, 16(1–1), 185–202. <https://doi.org/10.22495/cocv16i1c1art7>
33. Petzold, K., & Peter, T. (2015). The social norm to study abroad: Determinants and effects. *Higher Education*, 69, 885–900. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-014-9811-4>
34. Pitoska, E., Giannakis, K., & Sdraka, D. (2018). Corporate social responsibility and small-medium sized enterprises: Evidence from Greece. *Journal of Governance & Regulation*, 7(1), 40–48. https://doi.org/10.22495/jgr_v7_i1_p3
35. Robson, S. (2011). Internationalization: A transformative agenda for higher education? *Teachers and Teaching*, 17(6), 619–630. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2011.625116>
36. Robson, S., Almeida, J., & Schartner, A. (2018). Internationalization at home: Time for review and development? *European Journal of Higher Education*, 8(1), 119–135. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2017.1376697>
37. Soria, K. M., & Troisi, J. (2014). Internationalization at home alternatives to study abroad: Implications for students' development of global, international, and intercultural competencies. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 18(3), 261–280. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315313496572>
38. University of Gjakova "Fehmi Agani" (UFAGJ). (2015). *Rregullore për Rublikimet e Universitetit të Gjakovës "Fehmi Agani"* [Regulation on publication at the University of Gjakova "Fehmi Agani"]. Retrieved from <https://uni-gjk.org/upload/dokumentet/1609232922-6.%20Rregullore%20p%C3%ABr%20Publikimet%20e%20UGJFA-s%C3%AB,07-2015.pdf>
39. University of Gjakova "Fehmi Agani" (UFAGJ). (2019). *Regulation on internationalization and mobility*. Retrieved from <https://uni-gjk.org/upload/dokumentet/1581690453-Regulation%20on%20Internalization%20and%20Mobility.pdf>
40. University of Gjakova "Fehmi Agani" (UFAGJ). (2020a). *Strategic plan 2021–2025*. Retrieved from <https://uni-gjk.org/upload/dokumentet/1610114257-Plani%20Strategjik%20i%20UFAGJ%202021%20-%202025%20eng.pdf>
41. University of Gjakova "Fehmi Agani" (UFAGJ). (2020b). *Strategy of University "Fehmi Agani" of Gjakova for Internationalization 2020–2025*. Retrieved from <https://uni-gjk.org/upload/dokumentet/1589063841-Strategjia%20e%20nderkombetarizimit%20eng.pdf>
42. University of Gjakova "Fehmi Agani" (UFAGJ). (2020c). *Regulation on scientific — Research activity*. Retrieved from <https://uni-gjk.org/upload/dokumentet/1581589117-Regulation%20on%20Scientific%20-%20Research%20Activity.pdf>
43. University of Gjakova "Fehmi Agani" (UFAGJ). (2020d). *Rregullore për Universitetin Veror Ndërkombëtar* [Regulations for the International Summer University]. Retrieved from <https://uni-gjk.org/upload/dokumentet/1589064427-Rregullore%20per%20Universitetin%20Veror%20Nderkombetar.pdf>
44. University of Gjakova "Fehmi Agani" (UFAGJ). (2021a). *Baseline assessment for institutional capacity development*. Retrieved from https://uni-gjk.org/upload/dokumentet/1617261502-Baseline%20Assessment%20for%20Institutional%20Capacity%20Development_UGJFA.pdf
45. University of Gjakova "Fehmi Agani" (UFAGJ). (2021b). *Kodi i etikës i Universitetit "Fehmi Agani" Gjakovë* [Code of ethics at the University of Gjakova "Fehmi Agani"]. Retrieved from <https://uni-gjk.org/upload/dokumentet/1645609998-Rregullore%20Kodi%20i%20Etik%C3%ABs%2005-1105.pdf>
46. University of Gjakova "Fehmi Agani" (UFAGJ). (2022). *Code of research conduct and research ethics*. Retrieved from <https://uni-gjk.org/upload/dokumentet/1657695168-Code-of-Research-Conduct-and-Research-Ethics.pdf>
47. Waters, J. (2012). Geographies of international education: Mobilities and the reproduction of social (dis)advantage. *Geography Compass*, 6(3), 123–136. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2011.00473.x>
48. Waters, J., Brooks, R., & Pimlott-Wilson, H. (2011). ¿Evasiones de juventud? Alumnos Británicos, estudios en el extranjero y la búsqueda de la felicidad [Youthful escapes? British students, overseas education and the pursuit of happiness]. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 12(5), 455–469. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2011.588802>
49. Weenink, D. (2007). Cosmopolitan and established resources of power in the education arena. *International Sociology*, 22(4), 492–516. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580907078010>
50. Weenink, D. (2008). Cosmopolitanism as a form of capital: Parents preparing their children for a globalizing world. *Sociology*, 42(6), 1089–1106. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038508096935>