Tertiary Education in Lebanon

Legislation

The main law regulating the private higher education sector in Lebanon was passed in 1961, whereby a Council for Higher Education was established with the means for licensing new higher education institutions. The Lebanese university (the only public university in the country) is self-governing and has its own autonomous structure.

Many decrees regulating the sector were subsequently passed. The most important decrees of 1996 modernized the 1961 law and set out the conditions and criteria for a higher education institution to be legalized, given permission to operate and be audited by special technical committees. One of these decrees set out the criteria for establishing a sort of ‘university institute of technology’. Another decree set up a committee for the recognition and equivalence of diplomas; an exercise which had been in place since 1957 through a joint committee in charge of the equivalence of all qualifications in both pre-university and higher education. Other laws governing the practice of some professions, such as medicine and engineering, have existed since 1957.

In 2002, a Directorate General for Higher Education (DGHE) was established to regulate the private higher education sector and supervise and coordinate all actions related to it. The DGHE is in charge of the 41 private higher education institutions currently in operation in the country, while the only state Lebanese University (LU) enjoys clear autonomy with its own system of governance.

In 2003, the DGHE carried out the first audit of private universities. In 2010, the DGHE carried out a second audit and evaluation of new branches opened by different higher education institutions (33 branches).

A recently drafted law, submitted to the government for approval, calls for the implementation of quality assurance procedures in the institutions, leading to a sort of accreditation. Another law1 for the creation of a Quality Assurance Agency has been drafted and submitted to the government.

The freedom and independence of Lebanese higher education are protected under the constitution.

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Types of Tertiary Education Institutions

Tertiary education in Lebanon is provided by technical and vocational institutes, university colleges, university institutes and universities. Both the private and public sector are administered by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Technical and Vocational Institutes depend of the Directorate General of Technical and Vocational Education. University colleges, university institutes and universities depend of the Directorate General of Higher Education.

Higher education institutions in Lebanon:

1 public university: The Lebanese University
41 private higher education institutions:

31 Universities:
- American University of Beirut
- Lebanese American University
- Beirut Arab University
- Notre Dame University
- Beirut Islamic University
- Haigazian University
- Lebanese International University
- American University of Technology
- Islamic University of Lebanon
- Arab Open University
- Holy Family University
- Lebanese Canadian University
- Modern University for Business & Science
- American University of Science & Technology
- American University of Culture and Education
- Arts, Science & Technology University in Lebanon

7 University Institutes and Colleges:
- Ouzai University College
- Ecole Supérieure des Affaires
- Maten University Institute of Technology
- University Institute for Nursing Sciences of the Lebanese Red Cross

2. A university must start with at least three faculties, one of which should be for human sciences and another should be for sciences. These can grant all degrees, from Bachelor degrees to doctoral studies.
3. A university institute of technology or a university college has at least one faculty. Most of these grant BSc degrees. A few can deliver higher degrees.
3 University Institutes for Religious Studies:

- Near East Faculty of Theology
- St. Paul Institute of Philosophy & Theology
- Daawa University Institute for Islamic Studies

Tertiary Education in Numbers

The overall enrollment rate for tertiary education (ISCED levels 5 and 6) is: 51.6% (World Bank Database).

The ratio of enrollment for ages 20-24 is 30%.

Number of Students in HEI (academic year 2010/2011) account for 195,000 of which 47% are males and 53% are females.

Spending on higher education can be divided into government spending, household spending and external or private grants. Direct government spending on higher education does not exceed 0.5% of the GDP. The main direct government spending is channelled to the Lebanese University, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the CNRS (Conseil National pour la Recherche Scientifique) and to cover participation in financing some bilateral programs. Indirect spending includes, mainly, the Government's educational allowances and transfers allocated to government employees, at specific levels in the government, for the tuition of their children in private establishments. Household spending on education in Lebanon far exceeds that of government spending at all levels of education.

Quality Assurance in Lebanese Tertiary Education

Quality in the Lebanese HE system has been assured implicitly by the competitive nature of the Lebanese HE. The diversity of the system and its autonomy guaranteed by the Lebanese Constitution form a particularity of the Lebanese HE. However, the Lebanese HE has suffered from the different problems that occurred in the country and is facing an increasing demand which made the number of institutions and offered programs expand at a very high rate.

In this context the need for a clear quality assurance system appeared. Several institutions have already undergone an external evaluation with international European and American agencies. This clearly stresses the explicit needs in this domain. Several projects on quality assurance in higher education have been conducted. These include:

- Tempus: has supported two major projects in this direction. In 2005, Tempus granted a project entitled "Quality Assurance for Higher Education in Lebanon" (QAHEL). It focused on the definition of internal quality assurance systems and to train Lebanese experts in this field. In 2006, another project has been supported by Tempus and is entitled “Creation of the Lebanese Engineering Programs Accreditation Commission” (LEPAC). LEPAC has succeeded to define some documents describing standards, procedures and regulations for the external evaluation of the engineering programs in Lebanon.

- Lebanese universities have also participated to the UNDP project “Enhancement of Quality Assurance and Institutional Planning” (EQAIP) from 2002 till 2007. This project has evaluated 73 programs in Computer Sciences, Business Administration, Education and Engineering throughout the Arab region.

- In 2009, AMIDEAST financed a project led by the "Lebanese Association for Educational Studies" (LAES) and in which the Tempus-HERE ("Higher Education Reform Experts") actively participated. This project drafted the first version of a law aiming at the creation of the Lebanese Quality Assurance Agency. Most of the aspects described in chapters 3 and 4 have been debated within this project after reviewing the European and American quality assurance systems which has led to making the necessary choices and setting the ground for the Lebanese Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education. The draft law on the establishing of a quality assurance agency has been recently submitted by his Excellency Minister Dr. Diab to the Council of Ministers. The quality assurance system and the establishing of quality assurance agencies have also been recommended at the regional level in the latest Meetings of the Arab Ministers Responsible of Higher Education.

5 Click here to read a paper entitled "The Lebanese Quality Assurance System"
Education. Lebanon has considered the establishing of a quality assurance system as a priority on his modernization agenda.

Currently, the “Towards the Lebanese Quality Assurance Agency” (TLQAA) project is being supported by the European program Tempus. A consortium is formed of twelve Lebanese universities and institutions and, eight European institutions and universities. Among the European partners two European quality assurance agencies are participating to the project. The TLQAA partners are working to prepare the components of any possible external quality assurance system in the country.

Participation in the UGSC Exercise

University Sample

The UGSC exercise has been carried twice in 2012 and 2013.

The 2012 sample consists of 16 private universities, 14 of which are not-for-profit. In terms of age, we distinguish between two groups: six older universities, dating from before 1960 (with one established in 1866), and 10 younger universities, all established between 1988 and 2003. Of the sixteen universities, seven have a religious affiliation and nine are owned by non-profit organizations or private institutions. In terms of size, seven small universities host between 200 and 2,700 students, four average universities host around 5,000 students each, and three larger ones host about 8,000 students each. Another two universities host a significantly greater number of students, with nearly 11,000 and 17,000 students each. In terms of their research orientation, most universities (10) describe their research orientation both as basic and applied, two as applied, one as basic, and three universities do not consider themselves as research institutions.

The 2013 sample consists of 13 private universities.

Summary of Results

The average scores of the Lebanese private universities in the University Governance Screening Card show that they have a fairly high level of autonomy, average alignment of mission and goals and relatively good use of results-based management. On the other hand, they have fairly low accountability and low levels of participation. In general, these findings are not surprising given that all surveyed universities are private; hence high levels of autonomy are expected. However, two of these issues are of particular relevance: the relative low scores on accountability and participation.

The assessment of the 29 private universities of the Lebanese sample on the five dimensions of the Governance Screening Card, presented in Figure below, show a high score for Autonomy (4.2) and to a lesser extent for Mission, Context and Goals (3.4) and Management (3.2). In contrast, as stated above, the scores for Accountability (2.6) and especially for Participation (1.6) are relatively low.

More on TLQAA: http://www.tlqaa.org
In addition to the questionnaire, the screening card asks participating institutions to provide their own assessment or self-perception for each one of the dimensions of University Governance. In the Lebanese sample, the self-perception of universities appears quite close to the scoring on the questionnaire in terms of their management orientation and their autonomy. However, it seems that they overestimated the level of alignment between their mission and goals (4.6), their levels of accountability (4.0), and participation (3.3).

Average scores however mask important differences. In fact, Lebanese universities, when compared with the universities in the other five countries of the region (see figure below for regional comparison), showed some extreme patterns, with some of the best managed, most accountable and most participative private universities of the region, as well as some of the least accountable and least participative institutions.

**Participation in the “Action Plans” Exercise**

The World Bank team developed a template for an action plan that universities can refer to in order to construct an agenda for reforms. The template summarizes the current status of the university, based on the UGSC scores obtained in each of the five dimensions of university governance. Universities are to propose actions to be taken in order to
address their shortcomings. They need to state clear objectives with measurable indicators. The template also indicates who is responsible for carrying out these actions and what monitoring mechanisms will be used to follow up on results and within which time frame the intended reform will be accomplished.

All Lebanese universities that took part in the UGSC benchmarking exercise were invited to develop institutional action plans, 16 out of 29 universities have submitted action plans by the proposed deadline. A workshop during the regional event in Tunis (June 2014) was dedicated to the presentation and discussion of these action plans.

List of universities that submitted an Action Plan:

- American University of Culture & Education
- American University of Science & Technology
- American University of Beirut
- Balamand University
- Holy Spirit University of Kaslik
- Islamic University in Lebanon
- Jinan University
- Joyaa Institute of Technology
- Lebanese American University
- Lebanese International University
- Manar University of Tripoli
- Notre Dame University
- Rafic Hariri Canadian University
- Sagesse University
- Saint Joseph University
- University of Tripoli
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