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Reform of Lebanese Higher Education

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Ahmad K Jammal

Ministry of Education and Higher education, Beirut, Lebanon

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Ministry of Education & Higher Education
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Reform in Lebanese Higher Education

Ahmad JAMMAL

Director General of Higher Education

HERE 2016 Annual Conference

HERE & Their mission: Contributing to HE Reform

University of Barcelona, Spain

12-13 December , 2016

This presentation will cover:

- A historical background of the Lebanese HE sector
- Preconditions to Reform HE
- Major challenges to reform
- Steps towards reform & strategic plan for HE
- Key Success Factors
- Action Plan
- What has been Done
- The road ahead

Lebanese HEIs: history background

- In 1866 (AUB), in 1875 (USJ),
- One public university (LU) created in 1953,
- Before 1986, there was **10 private HEIs** (4 universities AUB, USJ, BAU, USEK, & 6 institutes. 4 were transformed later to universities LAU, HU, ULS, MEU),
- 1986-1996: new **12 HEIs**,
- 1999-2001: new **18 HEIs**,
- 2004-2011: new **7 HEIs**.

Lebanese HE: regulatory background

- 1961: HE Law & Council of Higher Education,
- 1962: Committees for recognition, equivalency, practice in Engineering, Colloquium Exams in Health & Medical sciences,
- 1996: Criteria for Licensing, Technical Committee, EQ in HE,
- 2002: Directorate General of Higher Education

In 2002, the DGHE was created to have the responsibility of the HE sector in Lebanon.

On the Basis of the existing preconditions:

- HE old system with good experience,
- Multi-diverse system,
- Open to international dimension,
- Major role in developing HR in Lebanon and the region,
- High autonomy of HEIs (academic, financial) even public one,

But:

- Old regulations: HE law dated 1961
- No mission or vision for the sector
- Licensing of 30 private HEIs from 1990 to 2001, without planning or needs' assessment analysis
- HEIs are non profit (by the law) - Misconduct of some HEIs,
- Lack of accountability,
- Problems of governance (no clear separation of authority between academics & founding party),
- Lack of transparency
- Questions about the quality of education
- Questions about relevance (employability)

Questions (Barcelona Conference)

- What to do? (**Actions**) How? (**Processes**)
- (**Actors**) *Who is responsible of developing HE system? Who will define the Mission & Vision of the system in Lebanon & How to do that? To whom it is accountable for? State, Public & Private HEIs, Orders, Students, Market, other stakeholders in general.*
- What are the **challenges**?

Basic considerations:

- ✓ The Arab Strategy for the development of higher education,
- ✓ The conferences of Arab Ministers in charge of HE (Beirut 2000, Cairo 2002),
- ✓ European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) & the European development in HE (BP),
- ✓ National new dynamic since 2001 (conferences, workshops and dialogues).

Recommendations to reform the sector:

Focusing on

- ✓ A new Strategy for HE: objectives, action plans,
- ✓ Introducing quality assurance in the sector,
- ✓ Encouraging HEIs, Professional bodies, etc. to contribute to the reform processes,
- ✓ Developing a new law for HE,
- ✓ Restructuring the HE system.

Major challenges to reform

- Engage HEIs in the reform process
- Engage other stakeholders (NGOs, Professional associations, etc.)
- Human Resources: Expertise & Capacity Building
- Lack of financial resources
- Political context
- Administrative context
- Social & economic context: unemployment aggravated by massive number of Syrian refugee's

Towards Reform in HE

First Step - National Mobilisation

2002-2005: Dissemination, Training, Institutional Audit, Conferences, Workshops (Parliament, Order of Engineers, Economic & Social Council, MEHE, HEIs)

Second Step - Reform Actions

2005-2007: Taskforces, National concertation
=> **Strategic Framework & action plans**

Third Step - Further reform actions

Since 2008- New tools & actors: DGHE, HEREs, Taskforces,
International Cooperation: EU, Tempus IV, WB, UNESCO, UNDP

- New resources (human and financial) & Capacity Building
- Planning in priorities (Coordination with partners)
- Creating taskforces: Regulations, Governance, QA, e-learning

Key Success Factors

- State engaged in reform (Parliament, Council of Ministers, etc.)
- HEIs committed to reform
- Spread of common language of reform
- Cooperation between public and private HE sectors
- EU support (ENP, Tempus, EM, Erasmus+, Horizon 2020)
- HEREs from 2008 (Training, National consultation, Support to stakeholders, Local actions and TAMs...)
- Support of the international community
 - UNESCO: ICT, EQA
 - UNDP: Programmes Assessment
 - WB: Governance
 - AUF: Training on self assessment

What Has Been Done (1)

- **2007-2008**: Strategic Policy for HE (plans and proposals).

Institutional Capacity Building (HEIs):

- **2006-2014**: **14 Tempus Structural Projects** : External Quality Assurance, Student services, Employment offices, Orientation, Career services, International relations, Employment Observatory, Distance Learning, etc.
Plus 4 E+ SP: (Networking, MERIC, TLQAA+ (Programmes Assessment))
- **2012-2013**: WB project on benchmarking governance in HEIs (29 universities from Lebanon involved)
- **2010-2016**: HERE actions and TAMs : LO, Credit system, EQA, Students services, e-Learning (debate), IQA, KPIs to monitor HE, Financing HE
- **2016-2017**: further training on Self Assessment with AUF
- **2017**: 4 HERE TAMs on Civic Engagement, Employability, Doctoral Studies and Rethinking HE reform

What Has Been Done (2)

At national level (legislation and regulation)

- **2012**: New decree for regulating doctoral programs
- **2013**: New decrees regulating pathways from VET to HE and for regulating the licensing of Medical schools
- **2014**: New law for HE ratified by the parliament (framework for the governance of private HEIs, management, finance, autonomy, participation, students and faculty members rights, QA and accreditation.
- **Since 2014**: 2 other laws in discussion in the parliament (ratified by the government):
 - Creating LQA agency: autonomous, standards, indicators, etc.
 - Restructuring DGHE
- **2014-2015**: Tuning Engineering, Architecture & Medical schools studies,

What Has Been Done (3)

At Local, Regional & International levels:

- Opening to new partnerships within and outside the country (Tempus, EM, E+ projects helped in this direction),
- Exchange of expertise in evaluation & QA procedures,
- Double & joint degrees,
- Exchange for recognition (National authorities, ERIC-NARIC network) & accreditation with European agencies, CTI, FEANI, RIBA, FIBAA, EVALAG, HERES, etc. + USA (NEASC, ABET, Middle State, etc.)
- Tuning to internationalise competencies & facilitate mobility,
- EQA with EUA & Accreditation of HEIs by European Agencies
- Networking with regional & international associations,

The road ahead

- Continue the action plan,
- Review of the strategy,
- Re-prioritise (continuous process),
- Finalise the implementation of the new law of HE,
- Develop a reliable monitoring system for the sector,
- Develop a NQF,
- Actions to address employability.

Still many difficulties

Political: instability slowing down legislative measures (QAA & DGHE laws stuck at Parliament), **Implementation of the new procedures and indicators for licensing**, Ethics & Code of conduct, Corruption, etc.

Resources: Lack of Human & Financial resources,

Social & Economic: Unemployment, refugees.

Thank you



Ahmad JAMMAL, Prof. Dr.

Director general of Higher Education
MEHE - DGHE, Habib Abi Chahla Street
Beirut, Lebanon

Phone: +961.1.77250 or +961.1.772677

Fax: +961.1.772529

Web Site: www.higher-edu.gov.lb

Twitter: @ajammal_lb

Emails: ajammal@outlook.com

ajammal@ieee.org

ajammal@higher-edu.gov.lb