

University Governance in Jordan

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Overall Description

Recent and ongoing governance reforms dealt primarily with external governance. Areas covered include the Council of Higher Education (CoHE), the Higher Education Institutions Accreditation Commission (HEIAC), Boards of Trustees (BoTs), and research and development. Higher education institutions in Jordan are either public or private. Universities are distributed geographically to meet social needs. For the first time ever, one unified law was issued in September 2009 that addressed the two types of institutions. The law, entitled the "Higher Education and Scientific Research Law," was issued in September 2009 and then amended in May 2010. According to the Law and its amendment, the CoHE is chaired by the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, and comprises:

- Secretary General of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research,
- President of the Higher Education Institutions Accreditation Commission,
- Seven persons who have expertise in academia and higher education and hold the rank of Full Professor,
- Director of Education at the Jordanian Armed Forces.

Members of the Council are appointed by a decision of the cabinet, which is endorsed by a Royal Decree. The CoHE is entrusted with a number of tasks, duties, and responsibilities. These include:

- Drafting the policy of higher education and submitting it to the cabinet for approval,
- Approving the establishment of higher education institutions in Jordan and approving the introduction of new fields of studies and programmes at all levels,
- Monitoring universities to ensure that they fully adhere to their pre-designed objectives and duties, and issuing the necessary bylaws required by the law,
- Setting the criteria for distribution of government appropriations to public universities,
- Setting admission criteria and the number of students to be admitted each year,
- Appointing the Boards of Trustees of private universities and approving the appointment of their Presidents.
- Recommending the appointments of Presidents of public universities.
- Approving the establishment of faculties, departments, institutes, and centers, as well as academic programmes and specializations at universities.

The Council of Higher Education encompasses units responsible for policy and strategic planning and coordination of admission to public universities operating in the Kingdom. The *Law* also establishes the *Scientific Research Support Fund*, which is an independent unit from a financial and administrative point of view that aims at promoting and supporting research in Jordan.

Other governing bodies affiliated with the Higher Education Institutions can be summarized as follows:

- Each university has a Board of Trustees (BoT). The BoT of a public university consists of a Chairman and twelve members, while the BoT of a private university has fourteen members in addition to the Chairman. The BoT of a public university is appointed through a Royal Decree upon a recommendation of the Prime Minister, whereas the BoT of a private university is appointed by the Council of Higher Education. The BoT undertakes a number of responsibilities, including the following:
 - Drawing up the general policy of the university.
 - Approving the strategic and annual plans of the university, based upon the recommendation of the University Council, and following up on their implementation and evaluation.
 - Evaluating the performance of the university from all aspects (academic, administrative, financial, infrastructure, etc.).
 - Appointing the Vice-Presidents and Deans upon a recommendation of the President.
 - Recommending to the Council of Higher Education the establishment of faculties, departments, institutes, and centers, as well as the institution of new academic programmes and specializations.
 - Determining the tuition and study fees, and approving the annual budget and annual report, based on recommendation from the University Council.
- The University Council is chaired by the President and comprises representatives from the local communities. It is responsible for the revision of the annual plan for infrastructure and its recommendation to the Board of Trustees, the recommendation of tuition and fees, and the approval of

¹ Names are listed in alphabetical order

the annual budget and performance and accomplishment reports before submission to the Board of Trustees. It is to be noted that although the above-mentioned Councils & Boards include good representation from enterprises, the Faculty and Department Councils have very limited numbers of representatives from enterprises.

Despite immense reform that has been witnessed over the past few years, a number of issues still need to be addressed and included in the ongoing process of reform like, for instance, student admission policies, reforming community colleges to enable them to assume their pivotal role in producing highly needed technical and paraprofessional skills.

External Governance

A strategic plan was developed for the higher education sector in Jordan for the years 2007-2012. It was developed in conformity with an all-encompassing "National Agenda". Its main components are:

Structure: Main external governance bodies are the Council of Higher Education (CoHE), Higher Education Institutions Accreditation Commission (HEIAC), Scientific Research Support Fund, Unified Admission Unit, Student Fund, Boards of Trustees, Higher Council for Science and Technology, and professional bodies. The Strategy covers different aspects of the higher education sector: governance & university management, admission policies, accreditation and quality assurance, scientific research & graduate studies, technical education, university funding, and the overall university environment. The Strategy is annexed with a detailed implementation plan that includes performance indicators. The plan calls upon the universities to develop their own plans. However, the plan lacked a financial component; and thus, three years elapsed with nothing significant achieved. Response of the universities was not up to expectations, and no team has been formed to undertake follow up on implementation. Adequate financial support was not provided to facilitate the implementation of the plan. Also, awareness about the plan and its importance has been weak, and its links with other components of the National Agenda were not publicized. Moreover, the plan was supposed to be dynamic and revised on annual basis, and its implementation was supposed to be monitored and evaluated on annual basis too. None of these have been done.

Funding of Universities: Universities are designated in the Law as "financially independent" institutions. This independence, however, is more nominal than real. Financial resources of a public university consist of: tuition & fees, government appropriations in the annual national budget, gifts and grants, and income gained from consultation and research outcomes and results. Governmental funding covers only 10%-15% of the overall operational expenses. Universities are trying to become more self-financed by introducing the so called "parallel program". A Student Aid Fund has been established to finance needy students and those who demonstrate academic excellence. Government provides scholarships to top students in the High School Secondary Certificate National Exam (Tawjihi). Distribution of government appropriations to state universities is currently the subject of strong debate. There are no agreed criteria, and the current process has deteriorated to a crisis management situation where funds are channeled to universities that demonstrate a dire need, without giving any consideration to the reasons that led to such dire need. Well managed universities lose out, and poor management is rewarded with state funds. Even though state universities are empowered by Law to set their tuition and fees (through their respective BoT's), they are in fact not allowed to increase the fees and any fees modification should be approved by the Cabinet. It is necessary to increase state budget allocation to a reasonable level and increase the wages and compensation of faculty members. Universities are now losing their good professors due to the low salary scale. Special allocations should be made for newly established universities. Finally, it may be good to adopt a modified fee structure. Private universities are completely dependent on the tuition and fees collected from students.

Research: The Scientific Research Support Fund is established with financial and administrative independency aimed at encouraging and supporting the overall scientific research activities in Jordan. The Funds' financial resources consist mainly of allocations in the national budget. In addition, each university allocates 3% of its total budget for research, and the Higher Council for Science and Technology (HCST) provides research grants. The Scientific Research Support Fund is growing at a reasonable rate. The Fund supports both graduate students and faculty members and the amount of funding is becoming appreciable. The support of the HCST is linked with national strategies. Research in general is not linked to the national needs. Cooperation with the private sector is minimal. Private sector support is very limited. It is necessary to reduce the teaching load of faculty members to provide them with more time for research, to link research with National Agenda, and develop international research cooperation to enhance the quality of the research output. Most faculty members conduct research to get promoted or tenured. Team work is limited.

Quality Assurance: The Higher Education Institutions Accreditation Commission (HEIAC) was established in 2007. The HEIAC has its own law; it is autonomous and reports to the Prime Minister, and its mandate covers both public and private institutions. HEIAC develops the accreditation and quality assurance standards and procedures. The President of HEIAC is a member in the CoHE. Accreditation standards have been developed

for the various programs. The Standards should be further developed and equally applied to both private and public institutions. Cooperation with international agencies is needed. Also, it is needed to set standards for quality assurance and apply them to all institutions and to develop experts in accreditation and quality assurance as well as an MIS to automate the procedures. HEIAC uses financial penalties, which is not a good approach to enforce the standards.

Role and responsibility: University governance is mainly based on three laws: Higher Education Law, University Law, and Accreditation and Quality Assurance Law. The university is autonomous academically, financially and administratively. Any new program leading to a degree should be licensed by the CoHE. The CoHE takes into consideration the economic and social aspects in licensing any program. Main themes of any program should adhere to HEIAC standards. A university is free to adopt teaching and learning paradigms and students' evaluation schemes. The HEIAC periodically monitors the university capacity in continuing offering licensed programs. Each university constructs its own curriculum and has a curriculum committee chaired by a vice president. Curriculum structure is based on best practices, international and local standards, and is unified. Faculty members are totally responsible for the courses they teach. At the end of each course, students evaluate both the course and the instructor. Number of admitted students to a stagnant specialization has been reduced to the minimum. Mandate of the curriculum committee is not well articulated. Coordination among the curriculum committees is minimal. Public universities do not adhere to HEIAC requirements. Relevance of the themes set by the HEIAC is not addressed. Outcomes of the programs do not emphasize the social and economic impacts. It is necessary to develop a scheme for program development in cooperation with the stakeholders, to enhance the student understanding of social and economic aspects of their discipline, and to engage professional bodies in the curriculum and programs development and evaluation. Program Learning Outcomes and Course Learning Outcomes are still very weak and many universities are not using this concept, in addition, the learning outcomes of universities are not related or linked to their mission and vision. Methodologies, indicators and procedures are needed to assess the learning outcomes of an institution and how much they are addressed by each program in the university. A general shift in the concept of Goals/Objectives approach to Learning Outcome based approach is needed. New programs should address social and economic needs and should be output driven. The Curriculum Committee should take the comments of students into consideration.

Curriculum planning and development: Curriculum planning starts at the specialized academic department. Participation of professional bodies, alumni, and employers enhances the quality of the program and strengthens links with the work place. The CoHE should not be involved in curriculum planning, whereas HEIAC should be partially involved in the curriculum standards. National core courses for each discipline are needed to facilitate students' mobility and transfer of credits. Granting full autonomy to the university in curriculum planning and development will lead to excellence and distinction. Currently, there is no formal cooperation with professional bodies and other stakeholders. Use of students' feedback is minimal. Flexibility of standards is needed to leave room for excellence and distinction. Construction of alumni database and identification of relevant economic sector to each program is needed. Each college should have a unit responsible for curriculum planning and development. Conducting market studies about the quality of graduates is necessary. Structure of the curriculum plan is based on three parts: University, College, and Department requirements. University requirements are mandated by the HEIAC on both the compulsory and elective groups, leaving no room for universities for innovation, special character and personality for the graduates and distinction. Universities are not allowed to construct their own requirements; all must adhere to the same structure. Moreover, in most recent requirements only one English language course is required and no computer skills requirements under this category. It is suggested that with the globalization, internationalization and Internet era, emphasis should be placed on strong English language and requirement of proficiency in computer usage, such as the International Computer Driving License (ICDL) or something similar. The later should be based on self studies and certificate acquisition before graduation. Universities should be allowed to construct their own structure of university requirements to reflect the university personality and mission on its graduates.

Accreditation and licensing: Licensing is under the jurisdiction of the CoHE, but it should be based on national needs. Accreditation is under the jurisdiction of HEIAC, which is independent. HEIAC follows up the licenses issued by the CoHE. Program licensing standards are not transparent. Continuous change of admission requirements affects the accreditation process. Licensing is biased towards public institutions. Licensed programs are traditional. There is no ranking to programs. Attention should be given to the quality of teaching and learning process outcomes. In addition to national accreditation, universities should seek international accreditation. Indicators and thresholds should be defined to measure and assess the program outcomes and the overall institution outcome. Data from the market (needs, quantitative and qualitative) should be available to the CoHE in order to be used for licensing and/or freezing programs.

Internal Governance: governing structures

Governing structures: Universities have multi-layered governing structures consisting of Board of Trustees (BOT), university council, deans' council, faculty council, and department council. Board of Trustees is chaired

by an academic for a public university and by academic or nonacademic background for a private university. It includes members from the academic community, enterprises, in addition to the university President. The university council is chaired by the President and includes Vice-Presidents, deans, elected representatives of faculties, two community members, two students, and it may include few senior administrators and an alumni. In general, the university council has an unclear role; it has "a lost role" between the BOT, deans' council and the Council of Higher Education. The deans' council is chaired by the President and includes the Vice-Presidents and all deans. Faculty council is chaired by the dean and includes the vice deans, heads of departments, elected representatives of departments, and 2 external members from the community appointed by a decision of the President and in consultation with the Dean. Department council is chaired by department head and includes all faculty members in that department. The deans', faculty, and department councils are pure academic decision-making bodies; other decisions go to higher councils for approval. Representation of students is negligible; students have one time voice through the university council, which are again not the final decision making bodies.

Autonomy, power and decision making: According to the laws, universities are autonomous academic institutions (financially and administratively independent). The President is appointed by a royal decree upon recommendation of the CoHE. University presidents in the private sector are appointed by the CoHE based on recommendation of their BOT. Vice-presidents, deans, and vice-deans are appointed by BOT upon the recommendation of the University President. This creates a gray area of power and critical decisions among the higher education council, BOT, and university councils. A search Committee for senior level positions should be followed, where calls would be placed for the position: President, Vice President and Dean; applications would be screened by the committee, candidates would be nominated, and then a decision based on qualifications and merits should be made. The primary decision-making role in budget and other important academic decisions (e.g. academic programs, number of students, admission standards) tends to lie outside the BOT. The decision lies within the mandate of the CoHE which might affect the ownership and implications for responsibility for decisions. Finance control (e.g. tuition & fees) is outside the university; government is still controlling this. Final budgets should be approved by the council of higher education. Strategic and critical decisions and power in private universities still lie within the hands of the owners reflecting more emphasis on commercial issues rather than academic quality measures.

Leadership: Presidents of BOTs in the public sector have good experience in academia. In some instances, university presidents are more experienced and influential than some members of the BOT. There is a need for training members of governing structures, senior managers, staff, students and external members of boards & councils. Code of conduct in the academic sector needs improvement. It is good to conduct studies on impact of external bodies and students representation in the governing body and the University. A major obstacle to realizing integration is the current high degree of centralization, both administratively and financially, which leads to inefficiency and slow decision making processes. Decentralization is a pre-requisite for integration where faculties, departments, institutes and units are given more administrative and financial autonomy but held accountable before university administration. Faculty members should play an active role in setting policies, priorities and budgets, and in selecting university administrators.

Department Council: Department council is chaired by the head of department. Department head is appointed by the President upon recommendation of the Dean, and for a period of one year, which can be renewed. The Council is responsible for quality of teaching at the department; discusses and expresses opinion on all matters related to faculty members (appointment, promotions, leaves, teaching load and other duties, etc.), and develops procedures that enhance quality of academic programs and curricula. Curriculum is developed by the department and discussed thoroughly at department council, but students and alumni input is minimal, if any. Faculty have relatively high teaching load.

Issues for possible improvement ...

- Strengthen role of the BOT in power and decision making.
- Revise role and status of university council
- Enhance a better dynamic relationship with board and different councils; internal and external stake holders, as well as students, academic staff and community.
- Ensure better students representation at different councils and committees in the universities.
- Establish standards for behavior: code of conduct and leadership developments
- Ensure effective control mechanisms (including risk management and audit)
- Enhance academic autonomy
- Encourage scientific research in the area of good governance.

Internal Governance: financial and human resources management

Sources of revenues: In public universities, about 10% only of their revenues come from government appropriations. Annual allocations are decided by the Ministry of Finance with no due regard or consideration to actual needs. At the same time, these funds are apportioned among universities with no due regard to management performance. The remaining 90% are from student fees, and the decision to set fees is in the

hands of the government, which decided 7 years ago to freeze them. In private universities, 100% of revenues is generated from student fees; student fees are set by the parent company, and they are driven by market forces of supply, demand and competitiveness. Governance reform for public universities include: (1) confine government allocations to the cost of infrastructure construction and to the support of R&D on a competitive basis, (2) authorize universities to determine their fees based on the cost of delivering educational services, provided that the next policy is implemented, and (3) set up a robust, sustainable system of student loans to ensure that no qualified student is denied higher education due to financial needs. For private universities, tighten quality control and quality assurance procedures to ensure that their clients (the students) are getting the best education in return for their money.

Budget preparation procedure: In public universities, the following is followed: (1) detailed budgets of every deanship and every administrative unit are submitted to the Department of Financial Affairs (DFA) of the university, (2) the DFA prepares a first draft of the annual budget, (3) budget requests are trimmed to conform to expected revenues following consultation between DAF and heads of academic and administrative units with input from the Office of the President, (4) a second draft of the budget is produced and is presented to the University Council for discussion and approval, (5) the approved budget is submitted to the Board of Trustees for analysis and adoption, and (6) the adopted budget is submitted to the Council of Higher Education for final approval and issuance of the authorization to implement it. In private universities, a similar procedure is followed; with the exception that budget requests are trimmed to conform to instruction, directives, and constraints of the parent company. Future reform may give the Board of Trustees the final word in approving budgets.

Authority to transfer funds within the approved budget: In public universities, this is possible; but governed by a set of bylaws and regulations. In that, the authority is vested in different councils depending on the hierarchy of the budget item, and it is graduated from the Deans' Council to the University Council to the Board of Trustees, and finally to the Council of Higher Education. In private universities, this is also possible; but contingent on the approval of the Board of Directors of the parent company, and more often the approval of its chairman. For potential reform, it is recommended to give the Board of Trustees the final word on budgetary transfers.

Authority to recruit, hire, and fire staff: Vested in the Dean' Council for faculty members, or in duly authorized committees constituted by the President for administrative and technical staff, and according to the provisions of a bylaw specifically legislated for each university. It is mainly concerned with filling allotted vacancies as listed in the approved annual budget. In private universities, the main condition that is observed in hiring or firing staff (faculty and administrative) are the HEIAC requirements, although some private universities are now trying to hire faculty members even if they are not immediately required for accreditation purposes, but they are distinguished in their field. An efficient EMIS platform is required to ensure that all procedures are reported transparently to ensure fairness and equity.

Authority in matters of wages, benefits, promotions, leave of all kinds, severance pay, retirement and dismissal of staff: Vested in the Dean' Council (for faculty members) or duly authorized committees constituted by the President (for administrative and technical staff) and according to the provisions of bylaws specifically legislated for each university. Wages, yearly increases, supplementary wages, contributions for social security and pension are all set in the bylaws, and the pay is the same for same ranks and categories and by no means linked to any performance evaluation. In private universities, the Board of Directors of the parent company or its chairman usually has the utmost say in this. For reform of academic staff affairs regulations, it is necessary to link category increases within all the ranks of faculty members to performance and achievements in all three domains: teaching, research, and service to society or the profession.

Utilization of ICT in governance: Building an EMIS is a critical part for HE development; the current status of MIS in the ministry is very weak. It only succeeded in building a Feeder System, Data Warehouse and Business Intelligence components; but the underlying structure is still isolated islands. Councils are mainly manual based operations. Many universities have systems with varying degrees of sophistication and utilization in the operations, on the management and higher administration it's almost not utilized nor efficiently used. A whole restructuring of the MIS is needed, more efforts are sought to achieve the target comprehensive EMIS.

E-learning: Many universities started scattered efforts. Legislations are currently under consideration for regulating and approval for degrees and programs completely based on e-learning. Recently the Minister formed a national committee to study the e-learning with all related issues and activities for the sector, the outcome will be a proposed draft for an e-learning roadmap.