

Paper prepared for the Jordan National TEMPUS Day 2004

H.E. Dr. Khaled Toukan

Honored Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

At the beginning of this important event, please allow me to extend to H.E. Dr. Isam Za'balawi, the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the very best wishes for successful day. I am honored to be speaking today on behalf of HE Dr. Za'balawi.

I welcome all who are present at this event: your attendance clearly illustrates the increasing interest in higher education as a main core element for national development and extends this indication of importance into actions based on the principles of cooperation and partnerships.

I shall briefly deal with the history of Higher Education in Jordan and its recent development, and then focus on the current situation of Higher Education. I will share with you our approach for the future through an overview of our new strategy and highlight two of the most important components for the future of Jordan; Information and Communications Technology, and Scientific Research. Finally I am going to place my comments in the context of the importance of today for all of us.

The creation of higher education institutions was initiated in 1951 based on the need to have a higher level of learning for the providers of education: the teachers. The first class to instruct teachers was located in Al Hussein College, which was opened in 1964 as the first teachers' college.

A prominent step in the development of university education in Jordan was taken in 1962, when the first Jordanian public university was established, namely The University of Jordan. Yarmouk University received its charter fourteen years later in 1976, and six additional public universities have been established in different parts of the Kingdom since that date.

Another major step in university education was taken in 1989 when the Jordanian Council of Higher Education endorsed the first policy document authorizing the establishment of private universities. This was a response to the increasing public demand for quality higher education. Consequently, Amman University, the first Jordanian private university, was established in 1990. Since that date, another twelve private universities have been founded.

Non-university tertiary level education is offered at Community Colleges. The college system was created in 1981. This resulted from conversion and re-development of the existent teacher colleges into institutions of college status. The number of colleges has increased substantially since that date to offer specialized, work and career oriented training, and prepare many students for work in middle-level professions. Colleges use the credit-hour system and are all affiliated to and supervised by Al-Balqa Applied University, which is a public university.

In summary, Jordan has:

- 49 community colleges (23,920 Students and 88 fields of specialty by 2004)
- 15 Governmental linked to Balqa' University and
- 6 Governmental linked to other universities
- 5 military colleges
- 21 private colleges
- 2 UNRWA colleges

There are 20 Universities:

- 8 Governmental (public)
- 10 Private
- 2 Regional (The Arabic Academy for Finance and Banking, The Open Arabic University)

In addition, it is planned that in 2005, the first Intra-governmental University will open its doors to students (the Jordanian-German University).

Two more public universities are to be established by 2005: as well as the Jordanian German University of Applied Sciences there will be the new Al Tafilah University and there will also be thirteen private universities in Jordan.

Overview of the Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research

The Ministry of Higher Education came into existence in 1985 but was annulled in 1998 and re-established in 2001 with the new name of The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. Today it undertakes the role of supervising the operations and programs of higher education institutions, applying the government's educational policies at the post-secondary level, and developing draft laws to enable progress and improvement in higher education.

The new Higher Education Provisional Law No. 41 was passed in August 2001. This law established the Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research to manage all higher education issues.

I would like to emphasize two main mission directions that identify the current Ministry: first that it supports an increasingly decentralized system, and also supports a very ambitious one Aiming at reaching international standards in accreditation and quality.

In recent years the Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research has signed numerous cultural agreements, protocols, and executive programs with its counterparts in different countries of the world. Usually each program lasts between two to three years, subject in most cases to automatic renewal, stipulates the details of cooperation in the field of higher education and in many cases specifies the numbers of university seats or scholarships to be exchanged between the two parties. In addition, other details concerning the exchange of formal delegations, students, teaching staff, text books and curricula, and so on, are also specified.

Non-formal and life-long education programs are offered at Jordanian public universities, some private universities, The Jordan National Institute of Administration, The Jordan Geographic Center, The Royal Scientific Society, and some public and private community colleges. The subjects offered at these institutions are related to the following fields: Managerial Sciences, Foreign Languages, Information and Communication Technologies, Secretarial Studies, Physical Education, Engineering, Industry, Agriculture, and many other subjects that can serve the needs of individuals and help to improve the skills and knowledge within local communities.

MoHE Strategy 2004 – 2006

The vision of the Ministry supports the development and maintenance of a high quality educational system, capable of producing qualified and specialized graduates in a wide variety of disciplines that will meet current and future needs to achieve social and economical sustainable development.

The mission of the Ministry is to produce student graduates who are equipped with academic and practical competencies and who will function with productivity and success at various levels in their professional endeavors.

The Strategy of the Ministry (2004-2006) is designed to cover eight main themes and these are:

- Student acceptance and admission process
- Study programs
- ICT
- Funding
- Accreditation and Quality Control.
- Creativity and Scientific Research
- Management of the Sector
- Legislation

I have a few more detailed remarks to provide on two of these: ICT and scientific research.

The Strategy for ICT in Higher Education

Two years ago, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan started the process of change to adapt and equip for the knowledge-based economy of the developed world. Laws were amended to give momentum to the new directions, and key investments were made in several sectors of the economy. Private sector companies that had become engaged in areas of technology were preparing for future initiatives and many universities expanded their programs in the fields of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Planning and consensus building programs were conducted. Public sector investments included infrastructure and equipment as well as the initial stages of training for instructors and other employees. Several donor organizations made substantial contributions to assist the initial phases of these programs. The REACH 2.0 report provides a good summary of the progress made against some of the specific goals that had been outlined.

It is clear that the quality of all levels of national educational systems is critical for continuing this progress in the workplace and in society as a whole. Jordan has a tradition of high literacy rates and extensive access to higher education. We must build on this tradition to introduce modern technological approaches to work, education, and public services. At present, however, the impact of information and communications technology is limited in both the educational systems and the workplace. Sound strategies are required for higher education to help Jordan move towards its national ICT goals and identify the necessary action plans and organizational and collaborative structures that will help achieve them.

Some **positive factors** already enhance Jordan's readiness to move forward and join in the knowledge-based economy. These are:

1. Students' ICT literacy is improving.

2. There are high levels of English language skills that match the job market's needs.
3. There is growing consensus on both the goals and the appropriateness of moving the higher educational system to support these goals.

STRATEGIES

The main strategies will be to:

Strategy 1: Train all university students in the use of important generic tools by increasing the general technology skills of all students and making these skills relevant.

Strategy 2: Train all students in the tools most commonly used in their specific profession and teach them how to access the sources of information that they will need in their jobs. Begin with the disciplines with the greatest impact on the economy and target discipline-related ICT use across the curricula.

Strategy 3: Ensure that students training to be teachers learn the principles of computer-based education and are familiar with the materials available for primary and secondary educational systems.

Strategy 4: Ensure that students training to be ICT professionals are familiar with both technical and other skills needed by employers and have a firm grounding in Computer Sciences.

Strategy 5: Create a temporary executive and management structure to make fundamental decisions and draw up the detailed plans needed to achieve these objectives and fund the programs.

Strategy 6: Improve the infrastructure required to deliver network-based education and other services and use existing resources more effectively.

Strategy 7: Use e-learning methodologies to improve educational achievements and to reach underserved populations within the general effort to make students completely comfortable with the use of technology.

Strategy 8: Build effective ties between employers and universities i.e. real interaction with industry and government employers.

The National Strategy for Scientific Research in Higher Education

Based on the importance of Scientific Research in higher education institutions for the planning of sustainable development in the country as well in meeting society's needs, the Ministry took the responsibility of developing the National Strategy for Scientific Research in Higher Education institutions. This strategy and supporting policies must link the academic research and development of technology to society needs and the development process.

The strategic priorities are:-

Strategy 1: Link Scientific Research and Technological Development plans and programs with the development plans and society needs, and enhance cooperation with the private sector

Strategy 2:

Accomplish comprehensive cooperation in all efforts spent by higher education

institutions in the field of Scientific Research and Technology Development

Strategy 3:

Develop the financial resources needed, to support the Scientific Research and

Technology Development in the higher education institutions

Strategy 4: Development of appropriate and suitable operational human resources and human resource systems to support and drive change

Strategy 5:

Use of Arabic Language in scientific and research activities

Strategy 6:

Develop a data-base for research and development by tracking the outputs of the research and development in universities and measure their interaction with the services and industrial sectors.

In order to be able to implement the strategic imperatives essential projects were

identified and designed. Some of them are already in the implementation phase and others will be in the near future. Our most important project is the Higher Education Development Project (HEDP) and the key reform areas in this Project are to:

- Initiate improvements in quality, relevance and efficiency.
- Initiate improvements in governance and management
- Initiate further reform of the Community College System/ Al Balqa' Applied University.

Other Projects were designed with full action plans as well, such as:

- The TEMPUS Agreement, and
- The Portal for Higher Education in Jordan

Future Focus for Ministry Activities and Projects These will include such areas of focus as

- the quality of graduates

- expansion in certain fields and areas of higher education to meet current and future needs
- accreditation procedures and efficiency
- the quality of learning culture
- benchmarking with the International Standards in Higher Education and Scientific Research.

The TEMPUS Office in the Ministry of Higher Education will add value to our common goals in higher education in general, and for scientific research quality and efficiency enhancement, as well as for ICT development. I would like to highlight the following features of the importance of TEMPUS for the higher education sector.

The TEMPUS program focuses on the development of the higher education systems in partner countries, one of which is Jordan, through a co-operation with the member institutions.

I wish to offer my thanks to TEMPUS for this opportunity to share our visions, aspirations and challenges with respect to Higher Education and would like to highlight that the Ministry considers TEMPUS as our partner, with whom we share common interest and hopes for the role of education as a cornerstone of a successful national economic and social development process.

Thank you