BENCHMARKING GOVERNANCE
AS A TOOL FOR PROMOTING CHANGE

100 UNIVERSITIES IN MENA
PAVING THE WAY

June 2013
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACU</td>
<td>Association of Commonwealth Universities</td>
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<tr>
<td>APQC</td>
<td>American Productivity and Quality Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMI</td>
<td>Center for Mediterranean Integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUC</td>
<td>Committee of University Chairmen</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>Europe and Central Asia</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDI</td>
<td>Foreign Direct Investment</td>
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<tr>
<td>GCC</td>
<td>Gulf Cooperation Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>HE</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEI</td>
<td>Higher Education Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICA</td>
<td>Investment Climate Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENA</td>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NACUBO</td>
<td>National Association of Business Officers of Colleges and Universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSSE</td>
<td>National Survey of Student Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCA</td>
<td>Principal Component Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PISA</td>
<td>Program of International Student Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA</td>
<td>Quality Assurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R&amp;D</td>
<td>Research and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>RCI</td>
<td>Redundancy Cost Indicator</td>
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<tr>
<td>UGSC</td>
<td>University Governance Screening Card</td>
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This report was produced by a team led by Adriana Jaramillo, Senior Education Specialist and Program Leader for the Higher Education Regional Program based at the CMI in Marseille, under the supervision of Mourad Ezzine, Education Sector Manager for MENA. Members of the team were: Luc Gacougnolle, Alan Ruby, Matt Hartley, Juan Manuel Moreno, Hana Addam El Ghali, Simon Thacker, Silvia Marchione and Laila Beghi. The team received comments and advice at different moments—from the conceptual stages through the data analysis and report preparation—from, William Experton, Francisco Marmolejo, and Hana Polackova Brixi. Emma Etori, Krisztina Mazo and Fatiha Bouamoud provided invaluable administrative support to the team at different stages.

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Transparency and openness are fundamental elements of institutional development. Recent events in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have highlighted the importance of openness and transparency in governance—government processes, decisions, and expenditures that are visible to public scrutiny, and voice for citizens in decisions affecting their access to basic services and economic opportunities. This applies to higher education just as much as it does to social and financial institutions, corporations, and public agencies. Institutions that are governed fairly, openly, and honestly improve the lives of individuals, enhance innovation, and function more effectively than closed and secretive organizations. To help higher education institutions to learn about their governance approaches, the MENA Regional Program on Higher Education has developed a governance screening card. It is a practical example of how to begin the difficult process of improving governance. It builds on the strategy in the *Better Governance for Development in the Middle East and North Africa* (2003) report, which proposes two universal criteria that might be used in defining ways to enhance governance: inclusiveness and accountability.

Measuring governance and quality of service delivery is central to improving education outcomes. This report addresses how university governance has been assessed and compared in 100 higher education institutions (HEIs) in seven countries in MENA, using an instrument that takes into account the underlying principles of transparency, openness, accountability, and voice and participation of stakeholders in decision making.

In light of the massive expansion of higher education (HE) systems observed worldwide, there are persistent concerns related to the quality and relevance of the HE provided. These concerns stem from the greater heterogeneity of students now enrolling in HE, with respect to their abilities, expectations, and
from the multiplication of new HEIs. To tackle these concerns, there has been a shift from input-based metrics (e.g., number of classes taken, study time, and student workload) towards outcome-based metrics like time to first job in field and research productivity.

In this context, university governance is one of the key elements that needs to be analyzed to initiate reforms conducive to improving outcomes. University governance is an important driver of change: how institutions are managed is one of the most decisive factors in how successful they are in achieving their goals. There are many university governance models. They vary with national context, type of institution, historical legacy, and other cultural, political, and economic factors. There is no single model or a “one size fits all” approach to university governance. It is also clear that choosing a governance model for adoption by a given institution must be a well thought out decision.

The key role played by university governance in the improvement of education quality has been a focus of attention in MENA countries for the past three years. HE ministers and policy makers expressed their specific need to benchmark university governance at a seminar held in December 2009 at the Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI) in Marseille.

As a result, the World Bank MENA Regional Program on Higher Education, based in the CMI, developed a University Governance Screening Card (UGSC). The UGSC assesses the extent to which universities in the MENA region are following governance practices aligned with their institutional goals and international trends and monitors their progress over time. It is a tool that allows MENA universities to compare themselves with universities around the world as well as reflect on their own progress towards their stated goals.

The UGSC was developed taking into account other benchmarking tools, such as the Australian Universities benchmarking tools, the European University Autonomy Score Card, the U.K. Good Practice Code developed by the Committee of University Chairmen (CUC), and the Governance Guidelines reviewed by OECD. The UGSC incorporates lessons learned from the use of some of these tools and provides a mechanism for monitoring changes introduced in governance practices and structures.

The UGSC takes into consideration the multidimensional nature of governance and does not identify an ideal governance model; its purpose is to identify trends. Using an institution-based approach that focuses on universities and HEIs as opposed to national systems or country ratings, the UGSC has the capacity to:

- Identify strengths and weaknesses at individual institutions;
- Identify governance trends at the national level;

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1 The CMI is a World Bank-managed multi-partner platform for knowledge sharing.
• Identify governance trends and practices by type of institution; and
• Generate interest in initiating reforms at the institutional, national, and regional levels.

The five dimensions of governance taken into account by the UGSC are:

1. **Overall Context, Mission, and Goals:** A key element in evaluating university governance is the overall framework of the HE system and the interaction between an institution and the state. Part of governance is securing the resources required to carry out the goals and mission of the university, as well as monitoring and holding accountable the performance of institutional managers at the highest level.

2. **Management Orientation:** Management refers to the day-to-day decisions of operating the institution, e.g.: the admission, registration, and certification of degrees for students; the appointment, remuneration, and promotion of academic and other staff; and the construction and maintenance of facilities. It also includes the machinery of management: how the head of the university and the members of its governing bodies are selected, their roles and responsibilities, their reporting lines, and so on.

3. **Autonomy:** Acknowledging the important practical differences between financial and academic autonomy, this analytical dimension tackles both. **Financial autonomy** is the ability of universities to set tuition fees, accumulate reserves and carry over surplus state funding, borrow money, invest money in assets (whether financial or physical), own and sell land and buildings, and deliver contractual services. **Academic autonomy** takes into account the extent to which universities can design or redesign curricula, introduce or cancel degree programs, determine academic structures, decide the overall number of students, and determine admission criteria, admissions per discipline, evaluation of programs, evaluation of learning outcomes, and teaching methodologies.

4. **Accountability:** As governments and ministries around the world grant more autonomy to public universities, this autonomy is often linked with greater accountability in the form of measurable demonstrations of achievement and progress on universities’ goals. As a dimension of governance, this refers to the accountability of academic staff, managerial staff, administrative staff, and governing bodies. It pertains to the process for evaluating the completion of institutional goals; the dissemination of information (including institutional goals, student achievements, alumni insertion in the labor market, internal and external institutional evaluations, and accreditation); methods used for evaluating the performance of students and teaching, administrative, and
managerial staff; financial auditing; and the process for risk management and dealing with misconduct.

5. **Participation:** The fifth dimension analyzes the extent to which stakeholders and their interests are considered and the role stakeholders play in the decision-making process. Although there is a wide range of stakeholders in university matters, depending on the type of institution as well as on the overall framework of the system, common stakeholders are students, academic staff, government, industry representatives, donors, community associations, unions, and alumni.

The results of this exercise to benchmark university governance in 100 universities in seven countries in MENA and the implications they have for policy changes at the national and institutional levels are discussed in this report.
Higher education (HE) systems worldwide are faced with many challenges; among others, these include: providing young people with the skills required by the job market; improving access to high quality educational services; and seeking new sources of financing to cope with the growing student demand. One of the most important challenges they face is being able to respond to a constantly changing economic and social environment and to adjust to the increasingly rapidly changing technology-driven international markets.

HE graduates looking for jobs today also face many challenges. For instance, the 2009 financial crisis triggered increased unemployment rates worldwide, an outcome likely to persist for a few more years. In countries in the MENA region, participation rates in the labor force, which were already low compared to other regions prior to the crisis, have declined even further (Jaramillo and Melonio 2011).

For MENA countries, recovery will depend on their capacity to develop new markets and maintain fiscal prudence. The recent political changes in the region give hope that governance in the region will be more democratic, transparent, and efficient in the long term. However, in the short term, the transition will add some fiscal burden in most countries, which will impact their ability to provide high quality HE.

This problem is not unique to MENA, but it is particularly acute there, as student numbers have risen dramatically in the past decade. This rapid expansion has increased the pressure on already scarce public finances, a situation exacerbated by the global economic crisis and the region’s political instability. Additionally, increased unemployment rates in the U.S. and the EU affect migrant workers there, potentially impacting workers from MENA.
Figure 1: Unemployment rates of tertiary education graduates in 2000 and 2010

Source: Author's calculation using OECD and other sources.

Figure 2: Unemployment rates in selected MENA countries by education, individuals aged 15–24, 2008–10

Over the past decade, tertiary education graduates in MENA have had persistently higher unemployment rates than those in OECD countries. In countries like Tunisia, the unemployment rate has dramatically increased in the last ten years (Figure 1). Among young people aged 15–24, university graduates have the highest unemployment rates in most MENA countries (Figure 2). And in all cases, unemployment affects women disproportionately more (Figure 4 and Figure 5).

To cope with scarce formal sector jobs, young educated workers are opting to either work in the informal sector or withdraw from the labor force entirely. In theory, acquiring informal jobs is a way for young, educated university graduates to enter the labor market, gain experience, and eventually move into formal employment. In practice, there is little mobility between the formal and informal

![Figure 3: Unemployment rates by gender (%), individuals aged 15–64, 2013](image)


![Figure 4: Youth unemployment rates, by gender (%), individuals aged 15–25, 2013](image)

sectors. Having to rely on informal sector jobs constitutes an important loss of human capital for youngentrants, as returns to education (even for those with a university education) tend to be very low in the informal sector. Net hourly wages among informal workers in the private sector are generally quite low, which suggests low levels of productivity.

**Main Constraints Preventing New Graduates From Getting Jobs**

In MENA, five key constraints affect the ability of HE graduates to land a job:

i. *Investments in the private sector remain low and capital-intensive.* Despite great improvements in recent years, private investment remains low in MENA. Due to high energy subsidies and negative real interest rates, most private investment in MENA focuses on capital-intensive activities. According to Investment Climate Assessment (ICA) surveys, corruption, unfair competition, and macro-economic uncertainty are important barriers to greater private investment.

ii. *Skills supply and demand are mismatched.* Results from enterprise surveys indicate that firms identify worker skills and education among their top five constraints to business in the region. Employers express dissatisfaction with deficiencies in relevant experience and technical skills and with employees’ lack of soft skills such as interpersonal skills, language, and personal habits. A large share of new HE graduates major in humanities and social sciences, which aids university graduates seeking civil service jobs in the public sector, but appears ill-suited to meet the demands of the manufacturing and service sectors.

iii. *The public sector still distorts incentives.* In many MENA countries, the civil service remains large relative to the level of development. Although the employment growth of the public sector has slowed dramatically in recent years, public sector employment still accounts for a large share of all formal sector employment in many countries in North Africa. Since public sector jobs are still associated with relatively generous medical, retirement, and transportation benefits and relatively short work hours, many educated individuals (mainly women) queue for public sector jobs. This phenomenon undermines entrepreneurship among young educated workers and contributes to long periods of unemployment.

iv. *Labor regulation remains rigid and labor taxes high.* Employment regulations in MENA remain quite strict and firing costs remain high. While the termination of workers due to redundancy is legally authorized in all MENA
countries, most countries have complex regulations that require notification, justification, and approval for dismissals. In some countries, employers are even required to comply with stipulated obligations to reassign and/or retrain workers after termination. Furthermore, firing costs involving notice requirements, severance payments, and penalties due when terminating a redundant worker are rather high in most countries in the region.

Protective firing regulations are partially explained by the lack of unemployment insurance schemes in most MENA countries. One indicator generally used to compare firing costs is the “Redundancy Cost Indicator” (RCI). The indicator measures the cost of advance notice requirements, severance payments, and penalties due when terminating a redundant worker, expressed in weeks of salary. The RCI in MENA countries accounts for 50 weeks of salary on average, versus 28 in Europe and Central Asia (ECA), and 27 among OECD countries.

While laws to protect employees have important moral and ethical dimensions, they can act as barriers to employment by making hiring managers risk averse and unresponsive to market demand for greater productivity.

5. **Innovation and investments in research and development (R&D) are needed to break the low productivity cycle.** In all knowledge-based economies, competition and strong firm turnover are at the core of the innovation process. Moving up the production ladder towards more knowledge-intensive activities in MENA requires improvements in the investment climate that favor innovation-based competition and business entry and exit.

### Unleashing the Potential of Higher Education and Productivity

HE improves national social welfare and contributes to economic growth. Various studies have shown that HE helps young people develop the skills necessary to participate in the global economy, encourages innovation, bolsters social mobility, and creates democratic and innovative leadership and citizenry (World Bank 2009). Universities promote economic growth and civil society participation because they create and disseminate knowledge, attract and develop talented people, foster new ideas, and enrich cultural life. One critical element in the contribution of HE to growth and prosperity is the greater employability and higher earnings associated with HE graduates. However, if graduates do not have the skills demanded by employers, their chances of being employed diminish. Unfortunately, in the context of the MENA region, the social and private returns to HE are not very high. Montenegro and Patrinos (2012) found that private returns to HE in MENA are the lowest worldwide.
Many factors influence economic growth, ranging from governance and overall macroeconomic and political stability to productivity, innovation, and the quality of skills that education systems can develop. Skills development is a cumulative, complex, and dynamic process that occurs throughout an individual’s life cycle. Skills are acquired through many avenues: the formal education system, informal and continuing education, and on-the-job training. Additionally, skills can be cognitive, academic, generic, or discipline-specific; there are also social and life skills related to being part of a social network or in a professional or work environment. Formal education systems play an important role in providing citizens with opportunities for acquiring skills. HE graduates should be able to enter the workforce with cognitive, behavioral, and social skills that allow them to bring advanced knowledge to solve complex problems, promote new ideas, and engage in diverse cultural environments.

A recent analysis of demand for skills in East Asia (World Bank 2011) measured wage premiums for workers, taking into account their education level, and showed that tertiary education premiums have been sector-specific, increasing in services, decreasing in agriculture, and flat in manufacturing. Likewise, it was observed that technologically intensive firms, and to some extent export-oriented firms, demand greater numbers of tertiary educated graduates. This observation supports the already well-documented interaction between technological development and tertiary education.
The associations between foreign direct investment (FDI), technology, and HE are critical for developing growth and productivity. Most countries in MENA need to produce higher value-added goods and services, and to do so they must first develop their technological capacity. HE can contribute to increased productivity, as has been evidenced in East Asia, but to do so it needs to produce an adequate supply of well-prepared people who can adapt and apply new technologies and ideas as they transfer between nations. Furthermore, experience from fast growing economies has shown that developing local technological capacities requires a steady stock of scientists and engineers involved in assimilating and adopting foreign technology (Figure 5).

Higher Education System Outcomes in MENA

Measuring the outcomes of HE systems is complex and requires examination of a wide range of indicators. However, the most troubling challenge is that information on relevant indicators to assess performance of HE is very scarce, particularly in MENA. Learning outcomes in secondary schools provide the foundation for the cognitive skills to be further developed through HE. The results for the few countries in the region that have participated in the Program of International Student Assessment (PISA) show that cognitive skills of high order are quite low in MENA especially when compared to Korea. In other words, a large proportion

**Figure 6: 2009 PISA results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>447</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubai (UAE)</td>
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<td>421</td>
<td>538</td>
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<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
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<td>398</td>
<td>546</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
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<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
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<td>546</td>
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**Source:** Jaramillo and Melonio, 2011.
of secondary school graduates who enter HEIs do so with levels of cognitive skills well below the average for OCED nations (Figure 6).

The completion rate in four-year programs, one of the few HE indicators available, provides an indication of the efficiency of the system. While completion rates increased between 2000 and 2010 in Jordan and Lebanon, the rates in Morocco and Bahrain are very low, and all MENA nations are under the OECD average (Figure 7).

In the absence of student learning outcomes in tertiary education, the number of scientific citations per 100,000 inhabitants is used as a proxy for intellectual contribution to the world body of knowledge. In this regard, the contribution of MENA countries, as in other developing countries like Malaysia, Chile, and Colombia, is very limited compared to OECD countries (Figure 8).

As discussed earlier, perhaps the most striking indicator is the disproportionately high proportion of tertiary graduates unemployed in MENA (recall Figure 1). This

Source: Kosaraju and Zaafrane 2011.
is a growing concern; e.g., in Egypt, 27 percent of unemployed people in 2006 were university graduates, compared to 9 percent in 2001. Although Egyptian university graduates still have better choices than secondary school graduates (62 percent of whom were unemployed in 2006), their unemployment rate has increased dramatically in the last seven years.

Increasing Accountability in Higher Education

Globalization and mobility of students have brought important challenges to universities all over the world. HEIs have not only become more diverse in type, ownership, and educational offerings, they have also diversified their missions, targeting specific groups of students, serving specific local or regional needs,
specializing in some niche areas, or establishing close links with specific industries/corporations (Altbach et al. 2009). This suggests that HEIs, over time, have assumed responsibility for a far wider range of occupational preparation than in the past. Altogether, this has resulted in a strong institutional differentiation to meet the needs of increasingly diverse audiences (OECD 2013).

In the past two decades, university reforms have been observed in most OECD countries, a trend now seen worldwide. In Europe, the Bologna process, the European Qualifications Framework, and the declaration of the Lisbon goals have been important and defining drivers of change in tertiary education. The effects of these European processes are seen outside of Europe, and the tools brought in to harmonize programs, provide quality control, and emphasize outcomes are being used widely not only in countries in the European Neighborhood or those aspiring to be part of the European Higher Education Area, but also in the U.S., Canada, and Australia, and more recently in Latin America, East Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa.

The emergence of the first global ranking of research universities in 2003 and the burgeoning of global rankings ever since have provided an unprecedented opportunity for HE institutions and systems to rely on these external instruments to support claims of their outcomes and to win high-stakes reputational capital (Shanghai Jiao Tong University 2003; Usher and Savino 2006; Rinne 2008). While rankings are less of a concern among the current elite “Ivy League”-type institutions, they garner more attention from recently established institutions or from developing countries, especially in the case of research universities, as these rankings are clearly focused on research indicators. Rankings draw much media and public attention and thus have initiated an “accountability movement.” They have started to guide the strategic behaviors of university leaders, governments, students, and employers (Hazelkorn 2008; Van Vught and Ziegele 2012). However, while rankings provide an important benchmark, they are far from providing points of reference for the wide type of institutions that offer tertiary education today.

In parallel with the growth of rankings and the trend of having outside observers, the governance and steering of HE has also evolved in the last two decades, spurred on by the growing number of HEIs, the diversification of their missions, student bodies, and roles, and the rise of “new public management” principles (Dobbins et al. 2011). The thrust of the new public management, at least in its early, neo-liberalist, pro-market form, was towards a more balanced powers approach—asking academics to be more accountable for results and financially forcing them to adopt quasi-market principles to strengthen patterns of externally defined public accountability (Deem et al. 2007). Overall, the growing complexity of HE systems has made central oversight increasingly inadequate,
and most countries in which it was prevalent have engaged in reforms to revisit HE steering mechanisms (Dobbins et al. 2011).

The University Governance Benchmarking exercise aimed to identify the governance practices followed by universities in the region and to provide a framework to analyze and compare university governance. It did not aim to evaluate individual institutional performance, but rather to provide an analysis and a reference point which can guide change and reform. By facilitating a better understanding among universities of the strengths and weaknesses of the governance approaches being used, universities can then identify areas for change. This ultimately helps universities to improve their functioning and performance to better serve the needs of their stakeholders.

The information gathered through this exercise has created an opportunity to build large databases with important potential for more research. The results of this exercise have also provided an opportunity to establish links between governance and other aspects important for policy development related to performance, such as admission and retention rates, insertion into the labor market, skills development, innovation, and contributions to economic growth. Although data related to university performance are not yet available in most MENA countries, this first benchmarking exercise raised awareness among the seven participating countries on the need to produce, collect, and disseminate performance-related information. The information collected has been useful not only for the 100 universities that participated in the exercise; it also constitutes the basis for a regional and global benchmarking exercise, and many countries in the Arab World and beyond are interested in joining.
Results of the University Governance Benchmarking Exercise: A Country Comparison

Great Diversity in MENA’s Higher Education Systems

One hundred universities took part in the University Governance Screening Card (UGSC) benchmarking exercise undertaken in Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Territories, and Tunisia. The data used for this study were collected in 2011 in Egypt, Morocco, Palestine, and in early 2012 in Tunisia, Lebanon, Algeria, and Iraq. Details on the methodology used for this study have been described in Jaramillo (2012) and are presented in Annex 1.

Table 1 shows the number and types of universities in each of the countries that participated in the study. In all countries except Lebanon, a purposeful sample was used to represent the variety of institutions, in terms of their size, location, date of creation, and legal type. Just over one-half of the universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country / Status</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Private not-for-profit</th>
<th>Private for profit</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
were public, followed by private not-for-profit and private for-profit. In terms of percentage of enrollment of the student population, they ranged from 35 percent to 78 percent of the national enrollments.

The total sample covers a variety of institutions. With the exception of Lebanon, where institutions participated on a voluntary basis, a purposeful sample in each country was designed to represent the diversity of institutions in terms of their size, location, date of creation, and legal type.

Universities were classified as public, private for-profit, and private not-for-profit. This distinction was initially defined and taken into account in preparing the sample. In addition, each university provided its own classification. The size criterion for the universities was the average student enrollment per country. Medium size universities were defined as those within one standard deviation of the average enrollment in the country; those below medium size were defined as small; and those with enrollment higher than one standard deviation of the average were defined as large. Location was defined as either a main or capital city or a small or intermediate city. The average age for all universities in each country was estimated; universities older than the average age were considered old, while those “younger” than the average age were considered recent. To calculate the average, “historic” universities such as the University Al Quaraouiyine in Morocco, created in 859, and Zitouna in Tunisia, created in 737, were not taken into account.

It was difficult to establish a difference between research universities, teaching universities, and community colleges for several reasons: first, the distinction between research and teaching universities is not made in the countries studied; and second, not all countries have community colleges. The Screening Card thus designated universities as General, Specialized, Religious (three universities), and Open (two universities).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of students in sample universities</th>
<th>Number of HE students in country</th>
<th>Percentage represented in the sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>460,990</td>
<td>1,188,562</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>801,179</td>
<td>2,232,434</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>295,075</td>
<td>501,344</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>79,986</td>
<td>216,851</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>196,182</td>
<td>324,100</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>153,802</td>
<td>213,973</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>280,382</td>
<td>370,058</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,267,596</td>
<td>5,047,322</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Percentage of country enrollments in the sample
Two are historical institutions, established between 700-900 AD, and another dozen universities were created between 1880 and 1950 (often during colonial rule). The vast majority of universities included in this study were established after these countries obtained independence and some as recently as 2009. The sample covers HEIs with a student population of 1.9 million with the student population universities ranging from 65,000 to 180,000 students, with three universities having more than 150,000 students (Table 3).

The exercise revealed great diversity in the seven countries’ HE systems, a product of different national histories, cultures, and reactions to changes in their economies and populations. This is illustrated below.

### The Sizes of the Public and Private Sectors

Algeria includes only public institutions in its HE system. In Iraq as well, the private sector is weak in terms of HE enrollments. In contrast, Lebanon has only one public university (which represents about 37 percent of the total student population) and 40 private universities, the majority of which are not-for-profit. The other four countries have both public and private institutions: Egypt and Tunisia have a majority of public universities, while Palestine has mostly private institutions. Figure 9 shows the institutions that participated in the benchmarking by country and their status.

### Diverse UGSC Assessments

These differences in status, age, size, and national contexts result in a wide diversity in the assessment results in all five dimensions measured (as described
Because each dimension is built differently according to the elements that contribute to its definition, the actual spread of individual scores and national averages is greater for some dimensions than others. For instance, on the Autonomy axis, national averages range from 2.1 in Tunisia to 4.3 in Lebanon, while on the Management axis, the range is much smaller, from 2.7 in Palestine to 3.3 in Lebanon (Figure 10). The differences in the latter scores are nonetheless statistically significant and reflect real differences in approaches in the countries’ institutions. It is interesting to note that most of the differences in scores on the Mission, Management, and Accountability axes are among universities of the same countries rather than between the national averages (the within-country variance represents 74 percent, 88 percent, and 80 percent of the total variance for these three dimensions, respectively). In contrast, about half of the variance on the Autonomy and Participation axes is between the country averages (the inter-country variance represents 58 percent and 46 percent of the total variance for these two axes, respectively).

Some of these differences can be linked to characteristics of the institutions. As illustrated in Figure 11, universities’ public or private status yields a clear dichotomy in scores: public institutions appear to have a much more formal and defined mission and legal framework, while private institutions enjoy significantly more autonomy. Such patterns also appear amongst universities of the same country. In Lebanon and Iraq, for instance, larger universities in their respective samples appear more accountable than smaller institutions.

2 Note that the source of data for all figures in the section is the UGSC benchmarking exercise.
The UGSC benchmarking exercise results for each of the five dimensions are presented separately in the following sub-sections.

The Context, Mission, and Goals Axis

The “Context, Mission, and Goals” dimension of the UGSC takes into account three sets of indicators: (i) the definition of the university mission, the process followed to establish it, and the stakeholders involved; (ii) the definition of the goals, their implementation, and the monitoring mechanisms used to evaluate
them; and (iii) the legal framework and national context in which the university operates.

National sample average scores on the Mission axis range from 3.0 in Palestine to 4.1 in Algeria, which appears to have the most regulated and centralized HE system amongst the participating countries (Figure 12). Algeria also has the least within-country variation in scores between sample universities. Lebanon and Palestine have the lowest scores on this axis, indicating a more flexible legal and regulatory framework for universities.

In its definition, the Mission dimension translates to the level of centralization, regulation, and often government control over the HE system. Not surprisingly, there is a strong, inverse correlation between this dimension and Autonomy. As illustrated in Figure 13, countries with the most centralized systems are also those that give the least autonomy to their universities. At the university level as well, the inverse correlation between Mission and Autonomy is statistically significant at the 0.001 level.

Lebanon and Palestine have the most decentralized systems. Private universities in Lebanon enroll 63 percent of all students in HE. They have been critical in the development of the HE system—they were the first HEIs to be established in the country and, as this study shows, they have been pivotal in developing good practices in terms of QA, being accountable for results, and using modern management tools. A well-developed private sector in HE is clearly a positive outcome of the system’s evolution in Lebanon. On one hand, the autonomy that universities have to introduce new programs and to develop their curriculum and teaching modes is aligned with modern practices, and this is clearly a critical element for universities to be responsive to the changing needs of social,
economic, and labor market environments. However, it is critical that when universities are granted autonomy that they also have internal and external accountability systems in place. Universities are and need to be accountable for their results to civil society, parents, students, and their communities. Therefore, it is important to take into account that while Lebanese universities have been established for a longer time and have been able to develop good practices in terms of accountability and responsiveness to society (there are also some among the newly established institutions), governance practices still need to be improved in some cases. This is particularly true for universities with high levels of autonomy, very low accountability, and low participation.

These findings point to the need to have sound mechanisms for regulation of services. This is actually one of the crucial objectives of quality assurance (QA) systems.

In contrast, centrally-driven systems restrict local innovation. One of the findings of this analysis is that the HE systems in Iraq, Algeria, and Tunisia are highly centralized, and the mission and goals of universities in these countries are centrally determined. The central governments in these countries have clear leading roles, leaving little room for universities to be innovative or to accommodate local needs in a timely manner. Although it is important to have a national vision for the HE system, individual universities’ missions do not need to be defined centrally. Moreover, for universities to be able to pursue their individual goals, it is critical to have well-defined missions that tailor to the specific needs and visions of the individual universities. One centrally defined mission could

Figure 13: National average scores on the Mission and Autonomy axes

Note: Scores are centered around the whole sample average for each dimension.
undermine universities’ capacity to specialize, develop competitive advantages, and respond to specific economic or social needs.

**The Management Orientation Axis**

The UGSC indicators for the Management Orientation dimension were designed to identify the extent to which a university follows results-based management aligned with modern public management practices. These indicators include: the type of university leader (i.e., president, rector, or chief executive officer) and the procedures for appointing the leader; the roles and responsibilities assigned, including the legal functions; lines of accountability; and the mechanisms for evaluating performance. Indicators also include the management structures, departments, or units and their roles, responsibilities, lines of accountability, and mechanisms for performance evaluation. The management structure of a university, meaning its most critical departments and functions, such as human resources, budgeting and accounting, academics, procurement, and legal services, was also taken into account.

Management appears to be the dimension for which there is the least difference between countries compared to the variation within each country sample. Despite similarities amongst universities of the same country in the way their decision makers are selected, the strategic orientation and inclination and ability to evaluate the performance of staff seem to reflect the behavior of individual universities, or types of universities, rather than national patterns.

The establishment of a university’s strategy and the monitoring of its achievement follow different procedures in the countries of this study (Figure 15). The

**Figure 14: Sample average scores on the Management axis, by country**

![Bar chart showing average scores on the Management axis for different countries](image)

*Note: Error bars represent the standard deviation in each country sample.*
majority of the universities appear to have a strategy, either at the institutional or the faculty level. In Lebanon and Palestine, close to 90 percent of the universities in the samples had strategies, which they established using internal reports or road maps. This element is the most common one used in all countries, except in Tunisia where partnerships with the state are more common. These partnerships are also used almost as much as road maps in Algeria, Iraq, and Morocco. In Palestine and Egypt, however, universities organize wide consultations or white papers to set their strategies.

During this strategic process, universities and the stakeholders involved also discuss various elements (Figure 16). All the Egyptian universities in the sample, for instance, discussed the process to achieve the institutions’ goals, and had the most detailed action plans to reach them. Action plans are also widely used in Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, and Palestine. All universities in the Lebanese and Palestinian samples also discussed their vision of education, or of research, while barely more than half of the Tunisian universities did. In general, this strategic discussion appears more thorough in Egypt, Morocco, and Palestine than in Algeria and Tunisia.

The attainment of goals is often measured using quantitative surveys that produce performance data, especially in Egypt, as well as in Algeria, Iraq, and Palestine (Figure 17). The assessment reports are most commonly conducted by governing boards in Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, and Palestine, while in Morocco and Tunisia, the state is more often responsible for these assessments; the most common practice in Lebanon is assessment reports conducted by an independent agency, although they are also used in many universities in Egypt.
It is interesting to note the patterns amongst the different countries in the kind of policies used to manage university staff. Whereas sanctions and incentives in the form of compensation linked to performance are used with similar frequency on average over the seven countries, there is variation in the use of sanctions (Figure 18). Algeria and Tunisia tend to place higher preference for sanctions in their management methods, while Egypt, Palestine, and, to a lesser extent, Morocco prefer to link salary increases or bonuses to performance. Iraq
and Lebanon seem to use both “carrot and stick” policies. In Algeria, Iraq, and Lebanon, the use of sanctions applies to academic staff as much as to human resources and financial staff, while in other countries, academic staff are less subject to sanctions (and sanctions are never used for academic staff in Morocco and Palestine).

The Autonomy Axis

For the Autonomy dimension, the UGSC includes indicators measuring the extent to which universities can make their own decisions, with or without clearance from the local or central government. The UGSC examines universities’ level of autonomy in deciding academic, HR, and financial matters, including decisions on academic programs and admissions, recruitment, and funding sources, assets, and ownership.

A large part of the variance in the whole sample for this dimension is due to the differences between countries, while a smaller part is explained by differences between universities of the same country (relative to other dimensions). This is not surprising, as this dimension looks at the level of institutional autonomy vis-à-vis the state. As illustrated in Figure 19, Lebanon and Palestine show high scores on the Autonomy dimension, while Algeria and Tunisia have the lowest national averages. Algeria, despite having a slightly higher score than Tunisia, has a much smaller variation in scores amongst its universities: all institutions
have very limited autonomy. The large variations observed in Tunisia are due to the inclusion of both public and private universities in the sample.

Part of the difference between the participating countries is explained by the share of public and private institutions in the sample. Private universities enjoy much greater autonomy than public universities in the overall sample, and this is true in each country sample (Figure 20). In fact, private universities in all the participating countries’ samples show similarly high Autonomy scores. However, there are wide differences in the scores of the public institutions: Palestine’s...
public universities seem to have almost as much autonomy as its private ones, while Iraq’s private institutions show the lowest scores.

The scores on the three domains examined by the UGSC (academic, staffing, and financial autonomy) also show country variations. In countries where universities have the least autonomy, it seems that the government is more inclined to give them some academic autonomy. HR and financial autonomy, which are strongly correlated, are observed only in less centralized countries (Figure 21).

Figure 21: Scores on the Autonomy sub-components, by country

The Accountability Axis

The Accountability dimension indicators look at academic accountability, accountability to civil society or social responsibility, and financial accountability. The academic accountability indicators include: the existence of internal and external QA mechanisms, the mechanisms in place to follow up evaluations, and methods used for evaluating the performance of students and of teaching. The social responsibility indicators look at clarity in the definition of accountability lines at all levels (academic, managerial, and administrative staff, and governing bodies); the process for evaluating the achievement of institutional goals, and the dissemination of information about the results. These include the ability of institutions to learn about graduates and the labor market and the dissemination of this information. On financial accountability, indicators include the process for auditing university accounts and the processes for risk management and dealing with misuse of financial resources.
On this dimension again, a large part of the total variance occurs between universities of the same country samples, rather than between countries (Figure 22).

When looking at the three sub-components of the dimension (education quality, social responsibility, and financial integrity), Palestine has the highest score for education quality. On financial integrity, it appears that despite wide variation in each country sample, the average score on financial integrity is almost the same in all countries—with Algeria and Egypt having slightly higher and lower averages, respectively, but these differences in means are not statistically significant. There are clear differences on how countries score in the three accountability sub-categories. While accountability on quality of education gets the highest scores, social accountability gets the lowest. This is mainly due to the lack of mechanisms in place to monitor graduates (Figure 23).

In terms of education quality, most universities seem to have some sort of QA system in place. However, in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, approximately one-fourth of the sample universities do not have a QA system. This contrasts with Egypt, Iraq, and Palestine, where all participating universities have a QA system in place. In most cases, QA takes place internally, within the university. In most of Egypt’s universities, QA also takes place outside of the university, under the responsibility of either the government or an independent agency. In other countries, external QA systems are less omnipresent, and when they exist, they are often under the responsibility of the government (Figure 24).

Fewer measures are in place in terms of social responsibility. While many universities track the number of years required to complete a degree, few have surveys in place to monitor the time it takes graduates to find employment, the
area in which they find employment, or their average salaries (Figure 25). While it may be difficult to put these surveys in place and to generate interest among alumni to participate, this appears to be a crucial area to develop to encourage HE systems to be more relevant to labor markets and to students’ needs.

Financial integrity is another area where universities show different accountability patterns. Most universities have audits conducted by external bodies,
although less so in Egypt and Tunisia. In most participating countries, the reports of these audits are generally, if not always, available for inside actors (Figure 26). The notable exception is Algeria, where university stakeholders have access to the audit reports in less than a third of the sample universities. The reports are less often shared outside of the universities: only in Morocco are the reports shared as much outside as inside of the institutions. In most countries, including in Lebanon and Palestine where university stakeholders have access to all external audit reports, few of them are disseminated outside.

**Figure 26: External audits and dissemination, by country**
The Participation Axis

The Participation dimension addresses the extent to which different stakeholders are involved in the decision-making process. A wide range of stakeholders have interest in university matters. The types of stakeholders usually involved in decision making include: students, academic staff, government, employers, donors, community associations, unions, and alumni.

By construction, the Participation dimension has lower scores, essentially because it aggregates the participation of stakeholders, who cannot all have maximum participation in university life. Yet significant differences can be observed between country sample scores (Figure 27), and almost half of the total variance occurs between countries’ averages rather than between universities of the same country. That said, Iraq is well below Morocco and Egypt. Its highest score just reaches the lowest score for Egypt and Tunisia and falls well short of the lowest score for Morocco.

Public and private universities also show different participation patterns, as seen in Figure 28. Evidently, donors have a degree of representation in private universities that they don’t have in public institutions. This participation seems to be at the expense of other constituencies, namely administrative and academic staff, and students, who have much lower participation in the decisions of private universities than in those of public institutions. Private institutions sometimes involve their alumni in decision making, but this almost never happens in public universities. There is very low participation of private sector representatives on the various boards of universities. This is an area that could, if developed, help

Figure 27: Sample average scores on the Participation axis, by country

Note: Error bars represent the standard deviation in each country sample.
universities establish a dialogue to better understand and provide education and training suited to the needs of their economies and labor markets.

Conclusions

This survey of 100 universities in seven countries reveals some interesting trends about governance in the region. Five themes worthy of note are: the degree of institutional autonomy; the use of incentives; academic autonomy versus administrative independence; accountability; and voice and participation.

Central Control versus System Steering. The most centralized systems are in Algeria, Iraq, and Tunisia. Countries with the most centralized systems are also those that give the least autonomy to their universities, whether public or private. There is a worldwide tendency to grant more autonomy to universities to be responsive to the changing needs of social, economic, and labor market environments. This has been coupled with developing regulatory frameworks to allow the state to guarantee quality control and develop the capacity to meet national goals. As Algeria, Iraq, and Tunisia develop their QA systems, they will also need to grant more autonomy to universities to enable them to be able to respond to their local needs and better serve their students and their communities.

To What Extent is Management Results-based? There are similarities amongst universities of the same country in the way their decision makers are selected, but the strategic orientation and inclination and ability to evaluate the performance

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**Figure 28: Participation of various types of stakeholders, by status**

Note: Scores are expressed in percentage of the maximum participation score for each constituency.
of staff seem to reflect the behavior of individual universities, or types of universities, rather than national patterns. Although institutions report that they have mechanisms in place to monitor achievement of their goals, in reality little evidence was found of systematic use of key performance indicators.

**Incentives, Sanctions, and Performance.** Whereas sanctions and incentives in the form of compensation linked to performance are used with a similar frequency over the seven countries, universities of some countries show clear tendencies to use one approach over the other. Institutions in Algeria and Tunisia tend to use sanctions in their management methods, while Egypt, Palestine, and, to a lesser extent, Morocco prefer to link salary increases or bonuses to performance. Iraq and Lebanon seem to use both “carrot and stick” policies. In Algeria, Iraq, and Lebanon, the use of sanctions applies to the academic staff as much as to the human resources and financial staff, while in other countries, academic staff are less subject to sanctions and sanctions are never used for academic staff in Morocco and Palestine.

**Academic Autonomy and Administrative Independence.** In countries where universities have the least administrative freedom on personnel and financial matters, it seems that the government is more inclined to give them more academic autonomy. HR and financial autonomy, which are strongly correlated, are observed only in less centralized countries. This is evident in the finding that private universities in all the participating countries’ samples show similarly high Autonomy scores. However, there are wide differences in the scores of the public institutions: Palestine’s public universities seem to have almost as much autonomy as its private ones, while Iraq’s private institutions show the lowest scores.

**To What Extent are Universities in These Countries Accountable?** There are clear differences in how countries score in the three accountability sub-categories. While accountability on quality of education gets the highest scores, social accountability gets the lowest. This is mainly due to the lack of mechanisms in place to monitor graduate employment rates or destinations.

In Egypt, Iraq, and Palestine, all participating universities have a QA system in place. In most cases, QA takes place internally, within the university, but in these three countries QA also takes place outside of the university, under the responsibility of either the government or a semi-independent agency. However in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, approximately one-fourth of the sample universities do not have a QA system. Algeria is in the process of developing its QA system, and it will be critical for Tunisia and Morocco to develop theirs if they are to improve the quality and relevance of their HE programs.
Only a few measures are in place in terms of social responsibility. While many universities track the number of years required to complete a degree, few have surveys to monitor the time it takes graduates to find employment, the area in which they find employment, or their average salaries. While it may be difficult to establish these surveys and to generate interest among alumni to participate, this is a crucial area to help HE systems to be more responsive to structural changes in labor markets and to students’ needs and aspirations.

Financial integrity is another area where universities show different accountability patterns. Most universities have audits conducted by external bodies, although less so in Egypt and Tunisia. In most participating countries, the reports of these audits are generally available for inside actors. The notable exception is Algeria, where university stakeholders have access to the audit reports in less than a third of the sample universities. The reports are less often shared outside of the universities: only in Morocco are the reports shared as much outside as inside of the institutions. In most countries, including in Lebanon and Palestine where university stakeholders have to all external audit reports, few reports are disseminated outside.

**Participation and Stakeholders’ Voices.** Public and private universities show different participation patterns. Evidently, donors have a representation in private universities that they don’t have in public institutions. This participation seems to be at the expense of other constituencies, particularly students, who have much lower participation in the decisions of private universities than in those of public institutions. There is very low participation of the private sector on the various boards of universities. Increased external representation could help universities develop better links between academic programs and the labor market.
Moroccan Code of Good Governance Practices for Enterprises and Public Institutions

The recent Moroccan Code of Good Governance Practices was developed to reflect the aspirations of the new Moroccan constitution, to anchor good governance not only as a practice but also as a culture and to reinforce the strong correlation between responsibility and accountability.

The code defines governance as “all the relationships between a company’s management and governing bodies and the shareholders, on the one hand, and the other stakeholders, on the other hand, and does so with a view to creating value for the corporation.”

The code reflects all the institutional, legal and economic advancements that affected the environment in which Moroccan corporations in general and public institutions in particular operate in order to offer a modern governance framework: code of commerce, anonymous corporations Act, competition Act, public procurements contracts code, banking act, labor code, public debt collection code, public officers, controllers and accountants liability act, code of financial jurisdiction, Council for the code of ethics in securities (CDVM), the state's financial control act for public institutions.

The implementation of the recommendations of this code requires corporations and public institutions to undergo an introspective analysis of their own status and involves a process of upgrading their human resources and mobilization of financial resources needed to improve the quality and frequency of data to be provided by the management. That is why each corporation and public institution is asked to produce a report in which it positions itself with regards to this code by stating how the recommendations of the code affected its legal structure, size, shareholding, activities, exposure to risks and management style. A national report is produced based on individual reports provided by each institution.

This code has five dimensions regarded as pillars for good governance practices for corporations and public institutions which underscore transparency, accountability, inclusiveness, stakeholder participation, and assigning roles to the State Institutions, and within Institutions to Governing bodies. Public Universities in Morocco adhere to this code, and must report on a yearly basis.
Lessons Learned from Benchmarking 100 Universities: An Institutional Analysis and Comparison

The UGSC process produces a lot of data and information about the many elements of governance and management. It aims to provide a university community and especially its leaders with information to guide reflection and shape processes of reform and improvement. In the previous section, the data were used to provide country comparisons. In this section, they are used to analyze institutional variation. As a further contribution to institutional and national policy discussions, the data have been analyzed using principal component analysis (PCA) to identify which factors account for the greatest variation.

The PCA identified two components that account for 64 percent of the data wherein the variance between the universities is maximized. Figure 29 shows

Figure 29: Principal Component Analysis component plot
the relationship between the governance dimensions and the two components identified in this analysis. Component 1 is strongly linked to the Autonomy dimension and, to a lesser extent, the Mission dimension (negatively), while component 2 is driven by the Accountability and Management-Orientation dimensions, as well as the Participation dimension. Thus, the first component represents how much autonomy universities have, and inversely, how flexible (or undefined) their mission and legal framework are. This first component clearly reflects the main differences between public and private institutions. The second component, in contrast, highlights how effectively managed, participative, and accountable universities are. In summary, the essential differences coming out of the governance characteristics of universities appeared to be related to how autonomous they are on the one hand, and how strategically managed, participative, and accountable they are on the other.

By plotting the universities against these components, these differences can be illustrated (Figure 30). This shows how public universities, generally less autonomous and more centrally managed, lay towards the left of the chart, while private universities can be found on the right (higher scores on component 1). While there is some overlap between the two groups on this axis, for the most part, the public universities have a greater score on the first component and lay to the right of the private ones. Figure 30 also illustrates how, independent of whether they are public or private, universities differ in the extent to which they are strategically managed, participative, and held accountable (i.e., their level of accountability).

Figure 30: Principal Component Analysis university plot
Hierarchical Clustering: Pattern Identification

To identify governance patterns, a statistical method of grouping called hierarchical clustering was used. This method aggregates individual observations into groups (“clusters”) so that the variance within each group is minimized and the variance between the groups is maximized. Hierarchical clustering thus allows the identification of groups within a sample according to their similarities (and differences) based on a set of variables.

In this study, the five governance dimensions were used as the main variables (Context, Mission, and Goals; Management Orientation; Autonomy; Accountability; and Participation). This study found that the two main different tendencies appeared in public and private universities. Among public universities, two main models were observed: “Traditional Public” and “High Accountability Public Governance” models. Among private universities, three main models emerged: “Private with Government Orientation,” “Private Participatory,” and “High Accountability Private Governance” models. Figure 31 illustrates the distribution of models in a developed tree format.

The Public/Private Distinction

This analysis revealed the existence of two main groups of universities (primarily private and public) and ten “outliers” (Table 4). These first two groups differ primarily in the extent to which decision making is centralized/decentralized, and in their level of autonomy and accountability. One group, exclusively composed of public universities (and referred to as following the “Public University” model), is characterized by a more centrally-driven legal framework, a low level of autonomy, and a slightly lower level of accountability. The second group, including all of the private institutions (and referred to as following the “Private University” model although it also includes some public universities), by contrast, is characterized by a more decentralized framework (i.e., a low level of government intervention), a high level of autonomy, and a relatively higher accountability.

Outside of these two main groups, there are ten “outliers” (public or private universities in the sample that did not fit into the above categories/groupings), with very high levels of management, accountability, and participation. Called the “Good Governance” group, it includes:

- Seven public universities (five in Morocco, one in Egypt, and one in Palestine) with high levels of accountability and participation; and
- Three private universities in Lebanon that had very high scores on management, autonomy, and accountability. These are three of the largest and oldest universities in Lebanon.
Figure 31: Distribution of governance models identified in hierarchical clustering process

100 Universities from 7 countries

Private Pattern
(31 private universities + 10 public universities)
- Low formality in Mission
- High Autonomy
- Higher Accountability

Public Pattern
(49 public universities)
- Formal Mission
- Low Autonomy
- Lower Accountability

Private Pattern
(10 private universities with High Management, High Accountability, High Participation)

Public Pattern
(28 universities)
- High Participation

Private Pattern
(10 universities with High Management, High Autonomy, Very High Accountability)

Public Pattern
(13 universities)
- Low Management
- Low Accountability
- Low Participation

Public Pattern
(13 universities)
- Formal Mission
- High Autonomy
- High Accountability

Private Pattern
(9 universities)
- High Management
- High Autonomy

Private Pattern
(5 universities)
- High Management
- Low Accountability

Private Pattern
(1 outlier)
- Formal Mission
- High Management
- High Autonomy
- Low Participation

Private Pattern
(13 universities)
- High Management
- High Accountability

Private Pattern
(10 outliers with High Management, High Accountability, High Participation)
Figure 32 illustrates this first distinction; it plots the institutions according to the Mission and Autonomy axes, the two features that most distinguish them. The distinction between the two identified groups (public and private models) is most visible on the Autonomy axis, against which the two groups have almost no overlap. Figure 33 also illustrates these differences between the two main groups, and shows how the Good Governance group compares to the other two groups.

Public University Patterns

The “Public University” group comprises 49 public universities characterized by a high level of centralized decision making and a low level of autonomy.

Within this “Public University” group, there are three sub-groups (see Table 5 and Figure 34). One sub-group distinguishes itself with a more formal mission and framework, higher levels of management, higher levels of autonomy,
and especially high levels of accountability. In particular, the 10 universities in this sub-group, referred to as the “Public with High Accountability” sub-group (Group 1.1), have a more strategic approach to management and a more results-based management of staff, which they can apply thanks to greater autonomy in the management of human resources. Their accountability scores are higher on each of the Education Quality, Social Responsibility, and Financial Integrity sub-dimensions.

The largest sub-group, referred to as the “Traditional Public” sub-group (Group 1.2), has 28 universities that show higher participation scores than the other institutions in the Public University group (Group 1).
Table 5: Characteristics of the three “Public University” sub-groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of institutions</th>
<th>Group 1.1 “Public with High Accountability”</th>
<th>Group 1.2 “Traditional Public”</th>
<th>Group 1.3 “Public with Low Governance Scores”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>by Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by Country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of institutions</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average scores on the 5 dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Group 1.1 “Public with High Accountability”</th>
<th>Group 1.2 “Traditional Public”</th>
<th>Group 1.3 “Public with Low Governance Scores”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Bold type indicates statistically significant differences (T-test; at the p < 0.05 level).
The third sub-group has 11 universities that distinguish themselves with lower scores on the mission, management, autonomy, and accountability dimensions. These universities, referred to as the “Public with Low Governance Scores” sub-group (Group 1.3), are less strategy oriented, have less performance-oriented management policies, and have low social responsibility scores.

While the majority of universities in Algeria and Tunisia belong to the “Public University” group, the Iraqi universities are spread almost evenly over these three sub-groups and Group 2 (“Private”). Although no public Moroccan universities belong to the “Public with High Accountability” sub-group, five Moroccan public universities belong to the “Good Governance” group, with higher levels of accountability (3.4) and very high levels of participation (3.2). The majority of the public universities in the Egyptian sample belong to Group 2 or Private due to their higher levels of autonomy.

**Explaining the differences between “Public University” sub-groups**

In the “Public with High Accountability” sub-group, universities had more representatives from civil society (64 percent), industry and business (73 percent), and syndicates/union (82 percent) participating in the elaboration of their missions than did the “Traditional Public” sub-group (which had corresponding participation rates of each group of 24 percent, 34 percent, and 45 percent, respectively). Further, the goals of those universities classified as belonging to the “Public with High Accountability” sub-group had their goals explicitly stated in the university’s internal regulations, while this was the case in only one-half of those universities found in the “Traditional Public” sub-group.

In designing their strategies, universities in the “Public with High Accountability” sub-group used a wide consultation approach (i.e., included many stakeholders) more often than those in the “Traditional Public” sub-group. Issues such as detailed action plans, visions of education and/or research, and internal regulation and procedures were almost always discussed in the strategic process in the “Public with High Accountability” sub-group. Additionally with this group, assessments conducted by the universities’ governing boards were always used to monitor achievement of strategic goals, while this was only the case in about two out of three universities in the “Traditional Public” sub-group. All universities in the “Public with High Accountability” sub-group discussed long-term strategy and institutional relationships (e.g., partnerships) during governing board meetings.

This analysis also found that among more than one-half of the universities in the “Public with High Accountability” group, the head of the university was elected while the university’s deans were appointed by a selection committee. Human resources and financial and academic departments amongst this group
were more often accountable to external audits, while academic departments were more often accountable to a QA agency. In addition, providing justification for expenditures was more commonly practiced in the “Public with High Accountability” group. In general, universities in this group possessed greater autonomy in deciding how to assess students and on the format of exams. Additionally, they observed more autonomy in developing academic partnerships with other institutions, setting admissions mechanisms and standards, including guidelines regarding the number of students allowed per program, and assessing the performance of administrative and academic staff. Finally, almost all universities in the “Public with High Accountability” sub-group have the possibility of using a multi-year forecast system (e.g., a Medium-Term Expenditure Framework system), while only one out of three institutions in the “Traditional Public” sub-group have that flexibility.

In the universities in the “Low Governance Public” sub-group (Group 1.3), the strategic process appears less thorough than in other universities of the “Public University” group: it often doesn’t cover, for instance, detailed action plans, values promoted, a vision of education and/or research, and internal regulation and procedures, where this is generally the case in the other universities, and very often so in the “High Accountability” sub-group universities.

The lines of accountability in the “High Accountability” sub-group also appear more developed: human resources, financial, and academic departments are almost always accountable to the deans and to the state and, more often than in the other sub-groups, to a QA unit as well. A wider range of policies is also used to provide incentives or enforce the regulations, including compensations attached to performance, score cards, and reporting measures.

The universities in the “High Accountability” sub-group appear to have more autonomy to assess the performance of their administrative and academic staff and to set variable salaries (linked with performance) than other universities; the “Low Governance” universities have more limited autonomy to manage their staff.

The differences between these groups suggest that national policies do affect institutional practice. Twenty-two of the 28 universities in the “Traditional Public” sub-group are in Tunisia and Algeria, and most of the universities in these two countries are in the “Traditional Public” sub-group.

While national policies affect individual practices, it is also observed that institutions that possess strong leadership can find ways to adopt sound governance practices, as was observed among universities in the “Public with High Accountability” sub-group. Within this sub-group, not only is academic QA practiced, but it often takes place outside of the universities, even if under the responsibility of the government. In these universities, QA systems usually address the accreditation of programs, the assessment of learning outcomes, teaching methodologies, research production, and facilities. In comparison, in
the “Low Governance” sub-group of universities, the QA systems never address the accreditation of programs, for instance (Figure 35, left panel).

The “High Accountability” sub-group also appears to be more responsive to QA processes, with action plans followed and regularly reviewed by internal QA units and by the head of the university, and variable budget allocations often linked with results (Figure 35, right panel).

The “High Accountability” sub-group universities also have better surveys in place to monitor the future of their alumni, notably to track participation in the labor markets, and the average salaries of the new graduates, even if such surveys remain rare. The results of regular financial audits are almost always available to actors inside the university, and are often disseminated outside of the university as well.

These observations show that public universities within the same country can and often do have different practices. Although the majority of Algerian universities are in the “Traditional Public” group, four of the 10 in the “Public with High Accountability” sub-group are in Algeria. This suggests that although accountability practices/.measures are not necessarily standardized in the country, individual universities are able to follow international standards. This is also the case in Morocco, where five public universities amongst the “Good Governance” group also present high accountability scores.

Private University Patterns

The second main group of universities is the “Private University” group comprises 41 universities, 33 of which are private (24 not-for-profit and nine for-profit)
and eight are public. In this group, there is very little state intervention in the universities’ decisions related to defining their mission; they have a high level of autonomy in most areas, tend to use strategic planning, and usually show lower levels of participatory decision making.

Of the eight public universities in this group, four are in Iraq, three are in Egypt, and one is in Algeria. The three Egyptian public universities are the most recent public universities in the sample, and amongst the smallest ones. All three of these institutions demonstrate a higher level of autonomy than is typically found amongst public institutions, as well as, on average, a higher level of accountability and a lower level of participation.

Within the “Private University” group, all universities received high autonomy scores and, on average, slightly higher accountability scores than the “Public University” group. However, four sub-groups emerged within this larger group (see Figure 37 and Table 6), highlighting different patterns within it. One sub-group, referred to as the “Private with Government Orientation” sub-group (Group 2.1) is made up of 13 universities, of which seven of the eight public universities are in this Private Group. It shows, on average, higher levels of central government intervention than the other three sub-groups, slighter more results-oriented management of staff, and less autonomy, a pattern closer to that of “Traditional Public” institutions. Another sub-group, referred to as the “Private Participatory” sub-group (Group 2.2), is also composed of 13 universities (of which one is an Egyptian public university). It differs from the other three sub-groups in terms of its significantly higher levels of participatory decision making and slightly lower levels of accountability. The third sub-group, comprising nine universities referred to as the “Private with High Accountability” sub-group (Group 2.3), shows a low level of formality of the mission and legal framework, slightly lower
Table 6: Characteristics of the four “Private University” sub-groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Group 2.1 “Private Government-Oriented”</th>
<th>Group 2.2 “Private Participatory”</th>
<th>Group 2.3 “Private with High Accountability”</th>
<th>Group 2.4 “Private Low Governance”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of institutions</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by Country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average scores on the 5 dimensions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Numbers in bold are significantly different from the rest of the Group 2 universities (T-test; significant at the p < 0.05 level).

Figure 37: Indicators of the Autonomy dimension for the “Private University” sub-groups
scores on management, and higher levels of accountability. The last and smallest sub-group of six universities, referred to as the “Private with Low Governance” sub-group (Group 2.4), shows very low levels of accountability as well as low levels of participation.

The mission of the universities classified in the “Private Government-Oriented” sub-group is always stated in their internal regulations. These missions and the goals of the universities are also often stated in a Ministry Decree and in the report of a reflection committee or council. During the determination of these goals, the major concern was their alignment with the nationally defined university mission, rather than reflecting the expectations of the internal or external stakeholders. Indeed, about half of the universities in this sub-group are public, and governments appear to have greater control over them than they do over the universities in the other sub-groups. The government, for instance, nominates members of the governing board, whereas that is never the case in the other sub-groups. The academic departments of these universities are also more often accountable to institutional councils (academic, research, or social councils) and to a QA center than in the other universities. This control also translates into less autonomy, especially in terms of staffing and financial management (Figure 38); they are less often free to decide on their own the overall number of students admitted, or to use unspent funds from one year to another or a multi-year budget.

In terms of accountability, universities in this first sub-group all have QA systems, and the action plans coming from their evaluations are followed by the deans and the head of the university, as in the other sub-groups (except

Figure 38: Participation profile of the “Private University” sub-groups

Note: Scores have been adjusted to make the participation scores comparable for public and private universities.
the “Low Governance” sub-group), but universities in this sub-group also more often make use of variable budget allocations linked with results to improve on the evaluations.

As for the universities’ decision-making processes, students are rarely represented on the academic council (although sometimes on the research council); the alumni and the private sector (industry) representatives are also less involved in the decisions of the institutions.

In the “Private Participatory” sub-group (Group 2.2), universities distinguish themselves from the institutions in the other sub-groups by their significantly higher levels of inclusion of various actors in the decision-making processes. These 13 universities (four in Egypt, six in Lebanon, two in Palestine, and one in Tunisia) give slightly more decision power to academic and administrative staff than other private universities. But it is in the level of participation of students and donors, as well as the inclusion of alumni and industry representatives, in the institutions’ decisions that these universities really differ (Figure 38).

Universities in the “Private with High Accountability” sub-group have less formal definitions of their missions. Only two of the universities report that there is a national legal framework that defines their status. In terms of the management of staff, the academic departments are more often accountable to the state than in other sub-groups.

QA systems are in place in all universities of this group, and the action plans coming from their evaluations are always followed up by internal QA units, and almost always by the deans and the head of the universities. However, only one university in this group uses variable budgets to link funding to results. The key component explaining the higher scores on the accountability axis is essentially social responsibility (Figure 40).
Lessons Learned from Benchmarking 100 Universities

Universities in the “High Accountability” sub-group have more surveys in place to monitor the employment rates of new graduates, their areas of work, and the number of years taken by students to complete a degree. Some have even established surveys to monitor the average unemployment period after graduation and the average salaries (Figure 41). These universities also disseminate information more widely on their websites and in public reports, newsletters, and brochures.

Finally, the six universities of the “Private with Low Governance Scores” sub-group distinguish themselves by very low accountability scores in terms of Education Quality and Social Responsibility, and by a very different pattern of participation in university decisions. These private universities (two Iraqi, two Lebanese, and one Tunisian) appear to be very much under the control of their
owners or donors. Achievement of the universities’ goals is monitored by the institutional leadership and governing board, but also, in all these universities, by the donors or owners. As seen in Figure 40, their scores are low on each of the three Accountability sub-components. Only two of these universities seem to have QA systems in place, and very little follow-up appears to be done (Figure 41). In terms of Social Responsibility, very few surveys are in place to track students after graduation, and very little information is disseminated.

The particularity of these universities is most striking when looking at their participation pattern: while in most universities the decision making involves primarily the academic staff, as well as students and administrative staff, in universities of the “Low Governance” sub-group, decision making primarily involves donors (Figure 38). This particularly discourages the participation of students and administrative staff, as well as alumni and private sector representatives.

**Conclusions**

The main dichotomy observed among universities in the study sample was on the Context, Mission, and Goals, Autonomy, and Participation dimensions. This separation corresponds to the divide between public and private universities, apart from a few universities and a number of outliers classified under the “Good Governance” group, which had both public and private universities. Thus besides the “Good Governance” group, the study classified the two main groups as either “Public University” or “Private University” groups as defined by the cluster analysis.

The 10 outliers showing “Good Governance” practices scored higher on Management, Accountability, and Participation. This group’s universities had their goals explicitly stated in their internal regulations; in designing their strategies, they used a wide consultation approach, and they had more representatives from civil society, industry, and business and unions participated in the elaboration of their missions more than in the other groups. Additionally, this group used assessments to monitor achievement of its strategic goals. This group comprised seven public universities (five in Morocco, one in Egypt, and one in Palestine) and three private universities in Lebanon.

Among the “Public University” group, three governance models were identified: “Traditional Public,” “Public with High Accountability,” and “Low Governance Public.” The first main pattern that emerged from the data reflected the “Traditional Public” approach characterizing most public universities. These universities generally had a more centrally-driven mission, a lower level of autonomy, and a higher level of participation. Most of the “Traditional Public” universities in this sample were located in two countries: Algeria, which only
recently established policies for QA, and Tunisia, which is still in the process of defining its QA policies. Both countries have inherited a French centralized government university model.

Within the “Public with High Accountability” sub-group, 10 out of the 49 universities in the “Public University” group had a higher level of results-based management and a higher level of accountability in achieving results. They showed trends of new public management. These 10 universities are located in four countries: Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, and Palestine. This provides indication that strong leadership at an institutional level can lead to the adoption of modern governance practices within different government and national policies.

The second main pattern that emerged is representative of most private universities and is, therefore, referred to as the “Private University” group, even though a third of them are public institutions. The 41 universities in this group enjoyed greater autonomy with decision-making processes and used fewer consultations and participatory approaches than that observed in public universities. Within the “Private University” group, four sub-groups emerged according to governance trends. The governance trends were classified as: “Private with Government-Orientiation,” “Private Participatory,” “High Accountability Private,” and “Private with Low Governance.” The six universities in this latter group were characterized by a very high level of autonomy, but very low accountability and participation.

One of the main differences between universities was their public or private status. It is critical to note that among the public universities, there was a sub-group characterized by a high level of accountability that appeared to adhere to practices aligned with modern and new public management trends. Even more interesting is that both types of public institutions, “Public with High Accountability” and “Traditional Public,” were found within the same country. This provides evidence that perceived limitations to adopting and following sound governance and accountability measures within universities are not necessarily a result of national policies. Institutions with good will and strong leadership are able to adopt international best practices. This implies that it may be possible for public universities to modify the status quo and adapt more modern “good governance” practices characterized by results monitoring and accountability. It is encouraging to note that within the “Public Universities” group, 10 showed high accountability practices. It is also of interest that these 10 universities were located in four different countries: four in Algeria, one in Egypt, four in Iraq, and one in Tunisia.

Within the “Private University” group, more variety was observed along the five dimensions and in terms of governance practices, resulting in identification of four sub-groups. Of the 41 universities in this group, nine were classified as part of the “Private High Accountability” sub-group, characterized by adherence
to “good governance” trends such as following QA practices through institutional QA units, monitoring new graduates’ employment rates, and disseminating the results of the accreditation process through their websites. Five of these universities were in Palestine, and there was one each in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia. Of these five countries, Palestine has probably the most developed QA system. These findings suggest that recent efforts to regulate the provision of public and private services through QA are producing positive results.

Within the “Private University” group, there were, however, five universities that showed adherence to practices characterizing low governance, with a very high level of autonomy but very low accountability and low levels of participation. These five private universities (two Iraqi, two Lebanese, and one Tunisian) appeared to be very much under the control of their owners or donors and in two cases were located in countries where independent QA agencies are not in place (Lebanon and Tunisia).

The objective of the UGSC benchmarking exercise was not to evaluate the performance of universities but rather to assist universities and countries in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of their tertiary education systems and to stimulate interest in reform efforts. In each of the participating countries, this has happened, and interest and engagement in reform efforts have already resulted in the initiation of such national and institutional reforms.

The openness of universities and government officials to the UGSC benchmarking exercise is an important first step in introducing the notion of monitoring university performance. This is in itself a paramount achievement towards improving accountability of service delivery, and a cornerstone for developing capacity to establish evidence-based policy making regarding HE in the Middle East and North Africa. Prior to the Arab Spring, one of the most important obstacles found throughout the region was the lack of national statistics. Although countries do collect information regarding the services and needs of their populations, this information has not necessarily been made available to the public, and it has seldom been used to inform policy.
Benchmarking has been promoted in the HE sector by a range of groups for at least 20 years. It attracted attention in the early 1990s when economic recessions increased competition for public revenues and reduced funding for HE. The recessions also heightened interest in cost control and efficiency measures as ways of increasing productivity in public agencies generally and universities specifically. Universities looked to the private sector for successful examples of cost containment and quality improvement, one of which was benchmarking (Astele 1995:2–4). The financial conditions of recent years have again stimulated interest in benchmarking as a management tool. Some national agencies like the UK Higher Education Funding Council (2012) see benchmarking as “a valuable tool to identify efficiencies and control costs” and to help colleges and universities “make better use of scarce resources.” The UK Higher Education Statistics Agency (2010) takes a similar view—benchmarking is a way to “improve efficiency.”

The interest in benchmarking is not confined to the search for efficiency measures. Benchmarking is also a response to “increasing competition and demands for accountability (which) are changing the ways in which higher education institutions operate” (Weeks 2000:59.) Competitiveness is most readily observed in market-based systems of HE where institutions vie for students, faculty, and resources. Some of these market-based systems have competition between public and private universities and others have performance-based competition between public universities. But even in less competitive environments, central funding agencies look for efficiency and productivity measures, such as benchmarks, to guide resource allocation decisions (e.g., between sectors such

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3 Prepared by Alan Ruby, Senior Fellow, Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania.
as health and education, or between types of education, such as vocational and
genral education).

One response to these changes in the external environment has been to look
to industries with a track record of success in quality improvement for ideas
and strategies that will improve productivity. The most frequently cited exam-
ple of successful benchmarking is that of Xerox, which responded to increased
competition and loss of market share by integrating benchmarking into its
organizational strategy to successfully reduce costs and improve productivity
(Epper 1999; Astele 1995; Achtemeier and Simpson 2005).

Financial constraints and competitiveness have produced some notable examples
of benchmarking in HE. The American Productivity and Quality Center (APQC)
started HE studies in 1996 and has continued to work with various national and
regional groups. Cross-nationally, the Association of Commonwealth Universities
(ACU) began promoting benchmarking as a “self-improvement” tool for organi-
zations on selected themes like strategic planning and risk management in the
same year (PA Consulting 2011:14). Some within-country groups of universities
have also adopted benchmarking as a way of improving management informa-
to enable its members to benchmark performance on key variables like student
numbers and research funding and output. And within the U.S., the National
Association of Business Officers of Colleges and Universities (NACUBO) promotes
benchmarking as both an efficiency measure and a process for self-improvement
(NACUBO 2012).

While these groups differ in scale (e.g., from the eight Australian research-in-
tensive universities to the over 2,500 NACUBO members) and in mission, they
all see benchmarking as an active process focused on institutional improvement.
This underscores some of the key characteristics of benchmarking.

Increased attention to institutional accountability in HE has also generated
greater interest in benchmarking. Innovations in public administration and the
increased autonomy of HEIs have encouraged ministries and HE coordinating
agencies to look for ways to monitor and analyze institutional performance without
intruding into the detailed working of universities. This approach to performance
management is compatible with a “corporate governance” approach to managing
public systems of HE in which universities are given greater autonomy in return
for enhanced accountability. In this environment, institutions are encouraged
to increase productivity and, in some cases, compete for funding on the basis
of performance against system-wide or institutionally specific benchmarks and
to participate in QA programs (Harman 2011).

Combined with financial constraints, increased competition, and the need
for greater accountability constituted a significant shift in the operating environ-
ment of HE. Institutions and national agencies hence looked for tools to enhance
efficiency, control costs, and improve performance. Given its notable successes in the corporate world, benchmarking was a logical, and common, response.

**Key Concepts in Benchmarking**

There are some generally accepted features of benchmarking and a measure of consensus about its benefits and its shortcomings. The most distinctive feature of benchmarking is that it is an active process that focuses on improving performance. It engages people in the workplace in a process of learning about what they do now, studying how others do what they do, and comparing the relative merits of the different approaches with the aim of making improvements. This is well captured by Epper (1999:26): “benchmarking involves first examining and understanding your own internal work procedures, then searching for ‘best practices’ in other organizations…and finally adapting those practices…to improve performance.” While benchmarking was once a term used by carpenters and surveyors to refer to a standard that was known to be true and reliable, it now refers to a “process of measurement using an external standard to measure internal and external tasks” (Weeks 2000:60) and to “systematically making comparisons to… make improvements and to accomplish change”(Achtemeier and Simpson 2005:117).

Benchmarking shares with comparative education fundamental design questions: the choice of comparators, who, how many, and from what domains? Responses usually fall into two groups: within-field and across-field benchmarking. Within-field benchmarking concentrates on comparing like institutions: a process of “peer to peer” comparison or a within-class or domain comparison; e.g., comparing research-intensive institutions or those dedicated to the health sciences. This can increase the relevance of comparisons and make it easier to transfer practices and policies because the context is largely the same. It can also limit the range of options and alternatives investigated because of the similarities of the institutions being compared.

A more wide-ranging approach is to make comparisons with institutions that are “best” at the process or practice under scrutiny. This is sometimes called “generic benchmarking” and can include comparisons with organizations that are outside the industry. The comparisons are not limited to HEIs but across fields, looking at the same process in other industries. For example, to compare efficiency in the distribution of text books and learning materials, it might be instructive to include Amazon or another online retailer in the comparator group rather than just looking at other universities. One argument in favor of this approach is that studying the best will be more informative than studying a similar institution. Another is that it focuses attention on a specific business process rather than trying to understand how to improve an institution overall.
It concentrates on the locus of change or the point of intervention and makes the change process more manageable and probably more achievable.

From the perspective of HEIs, benchmarking has six main benefits embedded in its comprehensive approach:

- It develops an organizational culture committed to quality improvement by involving many parts of the university and a cross-section of personnel (faculty, administrators, trustees, students, and researchers) in the task of studying ways of improving performance. It can also involve the wider community including parents, alumni, employers, and other social partners.
- It uses a systematic approach to appraising potential competitors or exemplars and looks at their component parts individually rather than in a summative fashion, like a research productivity index.
- It helps with strategic planning and forecasting by looking at processes and policies that might be adopted in the future and examines how they have or have not worked elsewhere.
- It acts a source of new ideas and points to some possible goals. In particular, it identifies “real innovation” and “demonstrated best practices” rather than simply the way in which universities with the best reputations do things (Epper 1999:30).
- By emphasizing data collection, analysis, and systematic inquiry, it adopts an approach to problem solving that is compatible with the overall mission of universities (see Astele (1995: 3-11) for a discussion of some of these benefits).
- It focuses on creating a model of action by getting a “sense of exactly how other organizations have improved their performance” (Epper 1999:31).

Benchmarking has its criticisms. It is relatively expensive. It takes money and time, especially as it involves a period of self-study, and it is comprehensive, looking at various aspects of the university in depth. It is also costly to independently identify, collect, and verify the data needed to assess processes. One way to contain costs is to use a consortia approach, where members of, say, a trade association share data and information freely and sometimes anonymously (PA Consulting 2011:30–31). This collaborative approach is used by the two early initiators of benchmarking, APQC and ACU.

Another criticism is that benchmarking’s roots in the corporate world, which values profit, client satisfaction, and tight control, make it inappropriate for HE, which values collegiality, shared governance, and academic expertise. This view overlooks the institutional benefits that can be gained from balancing the “external demands for accountability and efficiency…with internal concerns for improvement and effectiveness” (Achtemeier and Simpson 2005:126).

Other critics see benchmarking as instrumentalist or conservative, fostering change at the margins rather than looking for substantive or fundamental change.
By looking primarily within an industry or field, benchmarking narrows the scope of the search for improvements to things that are already being done, at the expense of inventiveness. These critics see benchmarking not as a source of innovation but as a process of adaption or movement towards the industry “norm,” promoting mediocrity not excellence (Astele 1995: 33–34).

Most of these criticisms about the scope of change are based on a narrow approach to benchmarking, when the comparison is limited to like institutions. They do not apply as readily to cross-field or generic comparisons.

Distinguishing Benchmarking from Rankings

The increased interest in rankings since the early 1980s comes from some of the same factors that stimulated interest in benchmarking. Notably, they are both influenced by a desire to increase productivity, but they differ in how they propose to achieve this end.

The popularity of rankings is due to their simplicity. Rankings make it relatively easy to compare complex institutions by reducing many variables to a single value to produce a rank order. To determine which university is superior, rankings often aggregate scores for: reputation; research commitment and productivity; revenue raised, held, and spent; and students attracted and selected.

This simplicity is also the weakness of rankings. Turner argues that university league tables are “excessively simplistic” and do the mathematically “indefensible …adding indicators which have completely different scales and … variations …which are not comparable. This error is compounded by aggregating measures from institutions and “systems where diverse and competing goals” exist (Turner 2005:371). It is like comparing a small sushi bar serving only the chef’s selection to a school cafeteria feeding nutritionally balanced lunches to a thousand students.

Despite these and other limitations, rankings have value. For example, they are useful for those seeking to make decisions about where to apply to study. Rankings simplify the task of evaluating the competing claims of many institutions. They can also serve as an aid to decision making when more detailed information about various universities is not available, accessible, or affordable. (See Ruby 2011) on the utilitarian value of rankings.)

Both forms of benchmarking, within- and across-field comparisons, stress the importance of looking for means or paths to improvement. This distinguishes benchmarking from rankings. University rankings are fundamentally about competition. They are attempts to assess which university is “best” or which is “better” than some others. Initial attempts to formalize these assessments were based on notions of measuring institutional effectiveness, asking which
university was the most productive. This basic formulation persists to some degree in most ranking systems. They tend to look at inputs, outputs, and outcomes. But many look at only one or two of these dimensions and rely heavily on the reputation of the university or program rather than on observable productivity of the institution, or how well it uses its inputs. (See Shin and Toutkoushian (2011) for an overview of the history of rankings and the different models behind various ranking schemes.)

The stated aims of the more widely known ranking schemes vary. The Times Higher Education rankings refer to improving academic decision making as “helping university leaders…make strategic decisions” (Baty 2012). The QS rankings offer a “multi-faceted view of the relative strengths” of universities (QS 2012) and Shanghai Jai Tong rankings focus on research performance (ARWU 2012). None of these three offers guidance about what might be done at the institutional level to improve quality or lift productivity. The dominant purpose is competition: which university is the best? If there is a theory of change behind rankings, it is that the desire to improve its ranking will motivate an institution’s members to perform to a higher standard or more efficiently. Shame or pride in an institution’s place on a ladder or “league table” will encourage its members to look for a better way of doing things or to change behavior in some desirable way.

Conversely, the theory of change behind benchmarking is more elaborate and sophisticated. Alstete (1995) ties it to the continuous improvement cycle of “plan, do, check and act” and to human learning theory. Weeks (2000) uses a five-step linear model of problem specification, analysis, planning, action, and reflection. PA Consulting (2011) uses a “strategy contingent” approach based on four questions: “Where are we now, what do we need to know, what information is available, and what can we learn?” There are other logic models or theories of change in the benchmarking literature, but all adopt a process similar to these three. All use a problem statement that includes an assessment of the current state, followed by research and data gathering on the way other institutions do, or have, worked. This is followed by analyzing those practices and adapting them to suit the institutional context or redesigning an existing process to integrate improvements. This new approach is then tried and evaluated. A version of this theory of change is embedded in the processes and protocols associated with the UGSC.

The University Governance Screening Card

The UGSC was conceived as a tool to examine complex institutions and to examine one key variable: governance. It captures the various elements that shape governance in universities. The elements and the way they are defined are discussed elsewhere in this report and in various other World Bank reports.
The UGSC does not produce an index of good governance. Nor does it provide an aggregate score that would allow universities to be ranked on a scale like research productivity. Rather, it produces a chart that shows how an institution functions on five dimensions of governance and compares that with how a leader of the institution perceives its operations. This reveals the degree of alignment between the university’s self-perception of its governance practices and a quantitative measurement of them.

Concentrating on alignment helps the self-reflection or self-study process that is most commonly used in the accreditation of established HEIs in the U.S. (Alstete 2004:62) and which is an integral part of most QA processes in the European Higher Education Area. The prominence of self-study in QA and accreditation comes from the widespread belief that it is likely to lead to institutional improvement.

The design and protocols for use of the UGSC acknowledge that institutions vary; even within the same field, academic tradition, and region they are different. These differences limit the value of summing the various scores on the scorecard to rank institutions. Similarly, the design and protocols of the UGSC do not assume or identify a specific model or form of governance; rather, they identify dimensions where institutional performance and perceptions of performance can be analyzed systematically.

The UGSC is a useful tool for self-reflection by members of institutions (as discussed in Part 6). But what are the benefits of the UGSC for governments, for national or cross-national QA groups, or for groups of like institutions? More specifically, how can the UGSC benefit cross-institutional groups?

Cross-Institutional Uses of the UGSC

The most obvious benefit is seen in the formation of the “communities of practice,” as occurred in the initial rounds of the UGSC’s application in MENA. Leaders of regional institutions worked together to deepen their understanding of their own institutions and of others. The UGSC provided a framework for dialogue and a sharing of practices, and gave leaders a common set of data and concepts with which to talk about the strengths and weaknesses of their institutions, and to subsequently identify strategies for improvement or change. In a sense, the UGSC provided them with a “language” to discuss the practice of university governance.

In general, communities of practice tend to be self-regulating in terms of membership and program of work. Their growth and development depend on

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4 I.e., groups where people “share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means” (Lave and Wenger 1991:98).
the value members derive from the activities and exchanges. As professional communities, they create, validate, and share good practices. Sometimes they codify these into standards which they promote and celebrate. They encourage practitioners to take responsibility for the growth and development of their profession and institutions and to use the standards to determine membership and recognize or accredit institutions.

For ministries and QA agencies, communities of practice are cost-effective forums for communication and improvement. They offer the benefit of the effective transfer of good practices between institutions without the administrative burden of central collection and verification of data. Another benefit is that benchmarking of universities pursued on a collaborative basis is cheaper in terms of time and money than acting independently. Analyzing a recent benchmarking study for the UK Higher Education Statistics Agency, PA Consulting (2011) identified the ready access to verified and reliable data and information about practices of like institutions and of leaders in the particular area as the biggest source of savings.

But ministries or QA agencies can have a proactive role. For example, a ministry can use the UGSC process to foster improvement by sponsoring and supporting institutional participation in national or cross-national studies because it will stimulate reflection, comparison, and improvement.

A ministry or QA agency can also look at the alignment between the desired shape of governance embedded in a nation’s policies about HE and its current reality. If a nation favors and promotes broad participation in institutional oversight bodies, how is this reflected in practice?

A ministry or QA agency can suggest that it favors a participatory model of governance—through community engagement, the involvement of social partners, and/or faculty involvement. It can place a value on student “voice.” By looking at the ministry’s ideal, the rector’s perception, and the assessment from the data assembled through the UGSC process, all parties can triangulate their assessments of a particular process or domain of governance. In some cases, this will point to areas in need of national and institutional attention. At the national level, it might suggest the need for laws and regulations to codify and promote greater participation or for changes to laws to limit the dominance of particular groups or agencies in governance structures. At the institutional level, it may point to the need for the inclusion of students on academic councils or the direct involvement of faculty, employers, and trade unions on oversight boards.

Ministries and QA agencies can work together across national boundaries just as institutions do. The benefits of the shared communities of practice can also be realized by regional groupings or consortia of ministries or QA agencies. An example comes from work under the Bologna process led by a network of European QA agencies to “develop an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines” and ensure that there is an “adequate peer review system” for QA.
agencies. This culminated in a set of standards and guidelines for the European Higher Education Area (ENQA 2005) and provided the basis for closer cooperation between HE agencies in Europe, including the establishment of a European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies in 2009. The creation of the Register was seen as an important step in “modernizing” HE in the pursuit of three goals: “enhancing employability” of graduates; “strengthening mobility”; and “improving data collection and transparency.” (ENQA nd.) The latest step in pursuit of these goals and an illustration of the practical benefits of close cooperation is a study commenced in October 2012 of different national practices in the publication of QA reports. Following an exploration of stakeholder needs for transparent and comparable data, the project team will examine the feasibility of creating a “European template for quality assurance reports” to increase transparency (ENQA 2012).

In the MENA region, the promise of this form and level of cooperation is illustrated by the work supported by the British Council to underpin joint work on fostering excellence in HE. Jackson (2009:87) concluded that “the logic of cooperation is compelling,” arguing that smaller states do not have sufficient opportunity or capacity to foster and support “effective peer-review systems and need the expertise offered by other countries to help establish common standards and good practice.” Regardless of scale and wealth, nations gain from sharing expertise, good practices, and materials.

There are also wider benefits, especially in regions where skilled labor moves freely across national borders. Employers gain by having greater confidence in the qualifications of people from other nations and have access to a wider pool of skilled professionals. And individuals gain by having their credentials recognized and more widely accepted, giving them access to a wider pool of job opportunities.

These economic and social benefits are increased when there is a shared market for skill and when there are significant numbers of people seeking work outside the country where they were educated. Similarly, the benefits to individuals and nations are increased when there are skill shortages that can be filled due to labor mobility.

Conclusions

The UGSC draws on the lessons learned from benchmarking in HE over the last 20 years by focusing on areas and processes within institutions as the most likely domains for improvement. This distinguishes the UGSC from university rankings, as does its concern with promoting institutional and cross-institutional dialogue about change and improvement. The uses of the UGSC within communities of
practice and consortia offer real benefits to HEIs and to agencies concerned with national policy for HE and QA. The UGSC and the processes associated with its use are a significant development in the use of benchmarking to promote change and improvement in HE.
The ancient Greek philosopher Socrates once said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” A good life requires being mindful of what one is doing and the choices one is making. This is true for organizations as well. The practice of disciplined self-reflection is a characteristic of all effective organizations: “What are we trying to achieve? What progress are we making towards our goals? What changes do we need to make to be more successful?”

Drucker (1954) introduced the idea of “management by objectives”—establishing clear goals and then arranging the work of institutions to fulfill them. He stated: “[It’s important to] Follow effective action with quiet reflection. From the quiet reflection will come even more effective action.” This cycle of action, reflection, and adjustment ensures that the activities of an institution are aligned to the purposes that organizational members believe are most important and are responsive to a dynamic and changing environment.

This section discusses why institutional self-reflection is useful, points out some activities that can be used for self-reflection, and describes some of the common characteristics of effective self-reflection practices.

Institutional Self-Reflection is Important for Universities

Universities are very complex organizations. Individual units or departments tend to operate with a lot of autonomy. Asked to define a university, the University of Chicago’s president Robert Maynard Hutchins said that a university is “a collection of departments tied together by a common [power] plant.” Part

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5 Prepared by Matt Hartley, Associate Professor and Chair of the Higher Education Program, University of Pennsylvania.
of the reason is because the ideal university is a collection of professionals with special expertise. No rector or president has the expertise (or the time) to look over the shoulders of his or her academic colleagues from a range of disciplines and tell them how to do their jobs. This state of affairs has some very positive attributes—it can give faculty members a sense of ownership in their work, and autonomy provides flexibility for innovation at the departmental level. But it can also lead to organizational misalignment; individual academic departments can end up working at cross-purposes or pursuing different goals. To avoid this, institutional self-reflection can promote institutional alignment by establishing shared goals. It can help people from across the institution develop shared understandings about what the institution as a whole believes is important for its students to learn.

Institutional self-reflection is also important because the world is constantly changing and universities need to adapt to those changes. For example, in the 1980s in the U.S., there were forecasts of a coming demographic shift. The number of “traditional age” college students (students between 18 and 21) was projected to decline dramatically. Some experts predicted that as many as a third of all colleges and universities would either merge or close their doors.

Some institutions responded in a way that was not particularly self-reflective: they decided that they would just try to do more of what they were already doing. Some tried to be all things to all people. They developed new majors and new programs in an effort to attract students. It was a huge failure because it ended up stretching the resources of the institutions rather than strategically deploying them and it tended to produce low-quality programs. However, some institutions were far more self-reflective. They asked themselves: What role should we be playing in this current environment? What can we do particularly well? What makes us special? They defined the unique strengths of their institutions, which allowed them to differentiate themselves in the marketplace and to be more successful competing for students. It also had the benefit of instilling in people who worked at those institutions a sense of pride about the institution and a feeling that they were contributing to its important mission.

Institutional self-reflection can also encourage institutions to rethink their accepted beliefs and practices. For example, in the 1990s when the demographic shift occurred, some campuses asked themselves: Who are our students and who should we be serving? This led many institutions to develop adult education programs, significantly expanding the number of people enrolled in colleges and universities in the U.S. Paying attention to a changing environment and rethinking accepted beliefs and practices can enable institutions to seize new opportunities.
Self-Reflection Activities

A number of activities provide opportunities for institutional self-reflection. Some are time-intensive and episodic; e.g., accreditation requires an institution to assess its activities in light of a set of standards established by the accrediting body and to produce evidence of its competence in those areas. For institutions that are already functioning relatively well (i.e., that aren’t in danger of losing their accreditation), the exercise can end up yielding very little useful change if the only purpose is to satisfy the accrediting body. But institutions can establish their own additional purposes for re-accreditation. For example, in 2004, the University of Pennsylvania went through accreditation. There was never any doubt that the university would be re-accredited, but it used the process to spur a campus-wide discussion about its PhD programs. The result was that the university limited the number of PhD candidates in many programs, redesigned its research mentorships, and made a strategic decision to fully fund all PhD students to better compete with peer institutions.

Strategic planning is another activity that can lead to institutional self-reflection. Strategic planning involves looking at current activities and asking: What are we doing well and where are we falling short (what are our strengths and weaknesses)? The process also requires institutions to look externally and ask: How have things changed in the past 5 to 10 years? What new opportunities exist that weren’t there before? Are there any potential threats to our current business model? For example, shifts in demographics, the expanding use of technology, and the recent economic crisis all are factors that would be a part of these discussions. The institution then has to decide how to strategically respond to the situation. For example, many institutions have decided that they need to do a better job preparing students to be successful in today’s knowledge economy. This means trying to promote greater critical thinking skills. Academic departments have redesigned courses to focus less on lectures and more on interactive team-based work and problem solving and community-based research projects.

Key performance indicators can also be established as a means of assessing progress in key areas. These may differ from institution to institution but most focus on the student experience (e.g., student satisfaction, graduation rates, percentage of recent graduates who have found jobs) and the financial health of institutions. Research universities can also monitor things such as levels of grant funding. These data provide information on how well things are functioning and allow the senior administration to suggest changes.

Benchmarking, the tool used by the University Governance Screening Card (UGSC), is another activity used for self-reflection. As the subject of this report, it is not described further here. But another example of benchmarking worth noting is the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) in the U.S., which
focuses on students’ academic activities and how institutions deploy their resources and create programs to encourage student learning. NSSE conducts an annual survey of hundreds of four-year institutions and then provides reports that enable institutions to compare their efforts with their peers. NSSE does not rank institutions, and all institutions in its aggregate reports remain anonymous. The process enables institutions to look closely at their activities and make decisions about how efforts might be improved.

Characteristics of Effective Self-Reflection Activities

Five characteristics are associated with successful efforts of institutional self-reflection:

(1) **They are inclusive.** Because universities tend to be decentralized, it is important to draw on the perspectives of people from across the institution when considering changes in institutional strategy. It may be that a potential future direction will have different ramifications in different areas of the institution. Inclusivity enables an institution to benefit from the experience and wisdom of people at all levels.

(2) **They create an environment that encourages (and even rewards) honest self-assessment.** Institutions (like people) often have an inclination to believe what they wish to be true. An effective process of self-reflection involves systematically and carefully gathering data. Part of encouraging honest self-assessment is making clear that the goal is collective self-improvement, not finding and punishing underperforming departments. It is helpful if institutional leaders can underscore that departments or areas that need improvement will not be punished provided that they develop plans for improvement. It is even more helpful if leaders allocate institutional resources to help units with promising plans to improve their work.

(3) **Effective institutional self-reflection efforts encourage dissent and debate.** Conformity tends to produce mediocrity. If the process of institutional dialogue produces a bunch of well-accepted truisms, then there is little chance for meaningful improvement. What is required is a robust debate about potential paths forward. Effective change efforts not only tolerate but encourage dissonant voices and it is extremely important for institutional leaders to signal their interest in hearing all ideas. At times it is the dissonant voices that point the way to new and unexpected innovations.

(4) **They make decisions about the best path forward by looking beyond the borders of the campus.** The fortunes of universities are shaped by larger societal
forces—demographic, political, and economic. Institutions can be distracted by important but ultimately internal matters. However, it is critical for them to look outside their walls. Who are an institution’s key external constituents, what are their concerns, and how might this influence their support of the institution? Have the kinds of students applying to the institution shifted over time and what are the implications of this? How satisfied are those who employ graduates of the institution? These kinds of questions enable an institution to think expansively.

(5) Effective efforts are centered on a larger purpose. Mintzberg (1994) argues that many efforts to promote strategic change fail because they focus on establishing many disconnected small goals but fail to adequately articulate the larger purpose of the effort. This results in fragmentation and an absence of institutional alignment. He puts it this way: “The most successful strategies are visions, not plans.” In other words, what enables institutions to move forward is for everyone to have a clear sense of the larger purpose they are trying to achieve. Institutions have unique strengths and circumstances. They have disparate aspirations. One of the imperatives of institutional self-reflection is to collectively arrive at a clear and shared view of what the institution is trying to become. This emergent sense of mission is important because it is instructive, and helps institutional members understand how their smaller efforts fit into a larger strategy, which produces greater institutional alignment. It can also give people a sense of meaning about their work, allowing them to see better how they are contributing to a larger purpose, which can foster a greater sense of commitment and satisfaction.

Benchmarking and Paving the Way Forward

In terms of the UGSC, participating universities found the UGSC exercise to be very beneficial. It enabled them to reflect on their models of governance and discover strengths and weaknesses. It also allowed them to identify areas for reform. Some of the concrete actions initiated by participating universities are summarized below.

Participating universities reported that after receiving their individual university reports, a natural next step was to analyze the results. Often a task force was created to review the report, to interpret the similarities and differences between the self-assessment and UGSC scores, and to calibrate themselves vis-à-vis the national averages.

Many universities established a specialized committee to revise the mission and vision of the institution and to draft a new strategic plan aligned with the new mission. Many participating universities adopted a participatory approach in these activities, involving various stakeholders such as students and academic
and administrative staff. This broader involvement was stimulated in part by the participation dimension of the UGSC.

In Palestine, one private not-for-profit university noted the absence of an official national strategy for HE. As a result, a few universities expressed interest in participating in a nationwide strategic planning exercise to adopt a national strategy for the HE sector and in developing its own strategic plan aligned with the national one once adopted.

Some participating universities reported initiating reforms in management practices. For instance, a private not-for-profit university in Gaza held several discussions to clarify the role of the board of trustees and its members’ appointment, duties, and reporting relationships. Another private not-for-profit university in the West Bank reported a broad array of actions: introducing new tuition policies; revising its organizational structure; revising staff job descriptions based on new office technologies; reallocating resources to provide more services to students; introducing budgeting reforms; and appointing business-oriented and experienced senior officers at top-level financial posts. A private university in Morocco reported undertaking an HR management system reform that will be in place by June 2013. And a private not-for-profit university in Morocco went on to conduct a survey to deepen its understanding of the institution’s governing bodies, namely its Board of Directors and its Academic and Research Councils; it obtained responses from its members on issues such as the extent to which their practices were participatory, inclusive, and transparent. The survey also went on to identify how Board meetings were conducted and if the Board was using efficient mechanisms for decision making.

To enhance its autonomy, a private not-for-profit university from the West Bank is working toward developing a salary scale different from the national one to help it attract the best faculty members. The same university is seeking improved investment policies to better utilize its idle resources in terms of endowment and lands. A private Moroccan university initiated steps to review its curricula and introduce new majors, while universities from Lebanon, the West Bank, and Gaza believe that obtaining accreditation through international mechanisms will boost their innovation and open them to new fields and new programs, hence granting them more autonomy. A private not-for-profit university in Algeria encouraged heads of its departments to take more initiative and granted them more autonomy.

A common response by participating universities without an existing QA system was to establish a QA unit that would work closely with their national QA agency. For instance, Lebanese universities expressed interest in interacting with the Quality Assurance Committee recently established by the Lebanese Universities Association to ensure and enhance quality management systems in their own institutions. A private not-for-profit university in Iraq that already
had a QA unit enhanced the unit’s role by engaging its QA agents/employees in training programs outside the country to increase opportunities for cross-border cooperation and to gain access to new techniques in the field of QA. Some universities solicited outside quality control consultation and ISO certification as well as programmatic accreditations.

In the same vein, a university in the West Bank sought to entrench adequate reporting practices by requesting its departments and units to submit detailed semi-annual reports supplemented with analyses, comments, and recommendations. Some universities also conducted surveys of students to measure the quality of their services. A private Lebanese university is focusing this year on improving the means and tools it uses so as to produce the most accurate statistical data to better reflect its real situation when undertaking self-assessments.

All participating universities acknowledged the importance of involving and interacting with many stakeholders. Measures taken by universities in this regard included increasing staff and students’ participation. For example, a university in Gaza added elected members to all governing councils at all levels. Other initiatives included establishing partnerships with outside agents at the program or department level; upgrading the role of students in university councils from a consultative role to a more participatory role; and promoting gender equality by encouraging women’s participation on boards and councils. A Moroccan private university stressed the importance of involving employers in teaching and in program design to match its curricula with market needs and to ensure the employability of its graduates. Many of the participating universities also sought the creation of an alumni association, and started contacting their graduates.

In the same spirit of involving more stakeholders, a university from Gaza is adopting several methods to increase interaction with local communities, such as forming advisory councils from industry, conducting more community-related workshops, and introducing new initiatives targeting local communities. A private not-for-profit university in Algeria organized sequential debates at the level of the scientific council and introduced an annual meeting at the end of each academic year attended by the administrative staff, representatives of each program and presidents of scientific councils of all faculties and departments, and unions to discuss their governance results. It also organized awareness campaigns to increase students understanding on the importance of their involvement in the decision making process and encourage them to take more active roles in all the councils they are represented at.

Concerning social responsibility a university in Algeria that obtained low results in this dimension, developed a comprehensive program to enhance the employability of its students. This includes adapting the programs offered, identifying possible employment opportunities and anticipating needs of different socio-economic sectors, and reviewing its pedagogical approaches to optimize
the process by which their students acquire the skills and competencies deemed
necessary by the job market.

These observations from case studies of self-reflection and improvement
underscore the importance of broad-based participation in the design and imple-
mentation of institutional reforms. They also illustrate the breadth and diversity
of actions that can flow from QA processes and from examining institutional
governance.

From the examples above, it is clear that participating in this exercise elicited
a call for action and reform. A critical next step is to ensure that these initiatives
are systematically implemented, disseminated, and eventually generalized at
country levels.
This report showed that there are different governance approaches used across the seven countries that participated in the UGSC benchmarking exercise. It demonstrated that some public institutions behave like private institutions and that public institutions within the same country can behave differently from one another. It showed that universities have different accountability levels, and that they follow different practices when it comes to consultation with stakeholders. The study has also contributed to the understanding of university governance in the region and more generally. For example, it has shown that in the region there is a trade-off between administrative independence and academic freedom. States where financial and personnel matters in public institutions are tightly regulated have a measure of academic autonomy. The study also revealed a widespread use of performance incentives and found that some countries also use sanctions to stimulate improved performance.

How are the different governance approaches fit to meet the challenges that universities are facing today? To be able to respond to the rapid changes brought on by the use of technology, the globalization of markets, and the needs of more diverse student populations, it is clear that universities need to introduce some changes in their practices. Only very few universities monitor how their graduates do in terms of finding jobs once they graduate. This lowers their capacity to read what skills are needed in their local environments and their ability to respond adequately.

While some universities have formal ways of including student voices in their consultations, many more do not. This diminishes their capacity to understand the needs of students and to be able to respond effectively to them. Likewise, most institutions do not have industry or employers represented on their governing
boards. This is a way to transmit information about current labor market requirements and the local prospects for economic development and research.

The report also showed that external assessments like the UGSC can be an important impetus to change and reform. It includes essays on the use and call for action that these sorts of assessments can have at the national and institutional level. In a world that is changing very rapidly, HEIs need tools that encourage them to revisit their goals, to look outside their walls, and to assess new possibilities and threats. They need mechanisms and processes that will encourage them to improve what they are doing and to question the status quo and to ask if there are other possibilities they should be considering.

These tools should be based on the key principles of transparency, openness, accountability, and inclusiveness that underpin good governance. This benchmarking exercise and its successful application in 100 universities across seven countries have led many universities to start a process of self-reflection and reform.

The 100-university study is also important methodologically. It has been an important stage in the development, testing, and refinement of the UGSC as an instrument. Its value has been enhanced by its successful use in seven countries across public and private universities, in both for-profit and not-for-profit entities. This exercise has paved the way for future efforts in other countries and regions such as Africa, Latin America, and East Asia. It constitutes an important building block for the World Bank Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) tools for tertiary education.

Regarding the capacity of public institutions to innovate, the study showed that effective leaders can adopt and implement international best practices in areas like accountability, transparency, participation, and strategic planning even in the absence of robust national frameworks to promote or enhance these practices.

This report highlighted some of the good practices already present in many institutions and the actions taken by many others to improve their governance approaches. The UGSC served to identify governance trends and models and helped to build a community of practice for HE leaders to share experiences and learn from one another. Examples of this were evident at the December 2012 meeting in Rabat where the University Network to Improve Governance and Quality was launched.

The UGSC demonstrated that it is applicable to universities in other regions. A critical next step in the MENA region is to correlate governance models with performance indicators. Countries in the region must make efforts to collect information on performance indicators such as student learning outcomes, skills developed, R&D capacity, and insertion in the labor market. Correlating governance models with performance is a critical element for enabling countries to define policies based on accurate and meaningful information.
The University Governance Screening Card aimed to produce a graphical and synthetic picture of each university’s governance in a spider chart, with each of the five governance dimensions represented independently. To produce each chart, the concrete situation of each university relative to each of the five dimensions had to be precisely evaluated with a numeric value. The Screening Card’s questionnaire was designed specifically to help determine each institution’s position along each of the five dimensions.

Positioning Institutions Along Each Dimension: Questionnaire Design

Governance practices were evaluated on five axes representing the five dimensions. Each axis was formulated in a binary way, with one extremity representing a recent trend (e.g., for the Accountability dimension, the trend was “How much is the university held responsible vis-à-vis its stakeholders?”). Thus, it was possible to position an institution along an axis by performing a diagnosis of the answers to the selected indicators for each dimension described earlier.

The questionnaire had 45 questions and was divided into five parts, corresponding to each axis or dimension. As each axis represented a distinct university governance trend, the questions addressed concrete practices that revealed how closely each institution followed the related trend. For instance, the 10 questions for the Accountability axis were designed to measure a university’s degree of accountability based on three indicators: (1) Education Quality, (2) Social Responsibility, and (3) Financial Integrity. Sub-indicators used to sharpen the analysis included: (1) the existence, contents, and consequences of quality
assurance; (2) the dissemination of information and labor insertion surveys; and (3) the frequency and contents of financial audits.

Each question was designed to ensure that the response would help determine how close the institution was to the trend represented by the axis. An example of a “yes or no” question used in the Accountability axis is seen in Figure A2.1:

**From Questions to Indicators to Synthetic Numeric Values: The Weighting System**

Since a chart to facilitate comparisons was desired, a numeric value had to be determined for each axis. The questionnaire used the indicators and sub-indicators for each dimension described earlier. Weights were attributed to these indicators to calculate a synthetic numeric value for each dimension. Weighting systems are necessarily subjective, and the system used for the Screening Card was no different, despite best efforts to remain as neutral and clear as possible.

University governance remains a new topic that has so far led to few scientific studies, so quantitative analyses were not available to help prioritize the relative importance of indicators within each axis. Given the lack of scientific basis to justify an elaborate weighting system, it was assumed that each indicator made the same contribution to the numeric value representing the axis. The aggregation method can therefore be compared to empirical scoring. A scale of 1 to 5 was used for each axis, and the contribution of each indicator to this maximum score was measured by simply dividing 5 by the number of indicators in the axis.

Figure A2.2 gives an illustration of the process for the Autonomy axis. Since the Autonomy axis had three major indicators, they each had the same weight of 1/3, and each indicator represented the same maximum score of 5/3.
Sub-indicators were given equal weight as well. For example, the Academic Autonomy indicator comprised two sub-indicators with equal weights of \( \frac{1}{2} \).

As a result, the maximum attainable score (number of points and contribution to the maximum of 5) for each question was obtained by dividing the maximum score of the sub-indicator by the number of questions.

Thus, the value attributed to each response given in the questionnaire, coded as 1/0 for a yes/no, can be easily determined by dividing the value of each question by the number of possible answers. Table A2.1 shows an illustration for the answers of the Autonomy sub-indicator “Admission Process”:

**Table A2.1: Example of value and scoring for the sub-indicator “Admission Process”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Axis</th>
<th>Autonomy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicator</td>
<td>Academic Autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Indicator</td>
<td>Admission Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of questions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Possible Answers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value Attributed to Positive Answers</td>
<td>5/18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The value attributed to a positive answer was then obtained as follows:

\[
\frac{5}{\text{Maximum score}} \times \frac{1}{3} \times \frac{1}{2} \times 1 \times \frac{1}{3} = \frac{5}{18}
\]

This system was both the most logical and the most neutral approach, and had the major advantage of making the indicators independent of the number of proposed answers.

This framework was designed to produce spider charts directly from the questionnaire and to populate the large databases that are likely to emerge from the next steps of the benchmarking exercise. The synthetic position of each
university was obtained simply by calculating the sum of the answers multiplied by their weight, a precise analysis achievable through the sub-indicators. Assessments on a larger scale (for example, at the country level) are facilitated by the possibility of building large databases of comparable numeric indicators.

**Validation of Instruments**

Validation of the instruments followed a three-step approach. First, during a workshop on June 14–15, 2010 in Marseille, the proposed methodology was discussed with participating countries, and the first two parts of the methodology (the dimensions and the set of indicators) were validated. To test the questionnaire and the scoring methodology, a pilot phase took place from June 15 to August 31, 2010, using a sample of universities in Egypt, Morocco, Palestine, and Tunisia. The third phase was a large-scale data collection exercise in 41 universities, carried out in 2011. The findings were discussed with representatives of all 41 institutions at a workshop in Cairo in November 2011. This process led to several important lessons on the methodology itself and increased awareness on the importance of governance among the institutions in which it was used. It was also useful for validating the Screening Card’s capacity to identify different models adopted by institutions and for allowing international comparisons. The findings of the first benchmarking exercise are the subject of the following chapters.

**Table A2.2: Chronology of validation of the tools and methodology**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identification of Governance as an Issue</th>
<th>Concept Note and Methodology Discussed</th>
<th>Pilot Phase Testing the Tools</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Data Validation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marseille Seminar</td>
<td>Marseille Seminar</td>
<td>Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, WB&amp;G</td>
<td>Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, WB&amp;G</td>
<td>Cairo Workshop</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comprehensive representation of the scoring and weighting systems for the four other dimensions is illustrated in Figures A2.3, A2.4, A2.5, and A2.6:
Figure A2.3: Example of the scoring and weighting process for “Context, Mission, and Goals”

Figure A2.4: Example of the scoring and weighting process for “Management Orientation”

Figure A2.5: Example of the scoring and weighting process for “Accountability”

Figure A2.6: Example of the scoring and weighting process for “Participation”
REFERENCES


Shanghai Jiao Tong University. 2003.


