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Classifying Higher Education Institutions in the Middle East and North Africa: A Pilot Study

November, 2011

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With support from:
Carnegie Corporation of New York

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The authors would like to acknowledge the following individuals who have provided valuable advice and assistance during the course of the study:

Nadia Badrawi, President, Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Peggy Blumenthal, IIE

Jan Sadlak, Faculty of European Studies, Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania

Mohsen Elmahdy Said, Ministry of Higher Education, Egypt

Patricia Rosenfield, Carnegie Corporation

Jamil Salmi, the World Bank

Seteney Shami, Social Science Research Council

Hillary Wiesner, Carnegie Corporation

LAES coordination committee members: Munir Bashur and Ramzi Salame

National research coordinators (LAES):

Abdallah AlBagami (Saudi Arabia), Abdelali

Kaaouachi (Morocco), Badr Abul-Ela (United

Arab Emirates), Jawad Nizam (Lebanon), Kamal

AbdelAziz and Ahmed Ibrahim Hassan (Qatar),

Khaled Saraierah (Jordan), Nouredine Dougui (Tunisia).

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Suggested citation: Bhandari, R., & El-Amine, A. (2011). *Classifying higher education institutions in the Middle East and North Africa: A pilot study*. New York: NY: Institute of International Education.

This report was made possible by a grant from Carnegie Corporation of New York.

The statements made and views expressed are solely the responsibility of the authors.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While the number of global and country-level ranking and classification systems continues to expand, a regional classification and assessment of higher education institutions in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has not been developed. Such a system is particularly needed given the rapid expansion of the higher education sector in the region, as new domestic institutions and branch campuses of overseas institutions emerge. As a result, higher education in the Arab countries nowadays is complex and takes disparate forms. Such a situation leads to some confusion in the ranks of Arab educators themselves, as well as among international observers, particularly in terms of meanings and equivalences.

From an international perspective, the varying nature of higher education institutions and degrees in the region has consequences for the way international agencies and higher education institutions can relate to credentials issued in the Arab countries. This is a challenging issue particularly as students' mobility from Arab countries towards the U.S. and other OECD countries has taken a significant leap in recent years. According to the Institute of International Education's *Open Doors* report, out of a world total of 723,277 foreign students in the USA in 2010/11, 47,963 or seven percent were from the MENA region, an increase of 24 percent over the previous year. In the meantime, classification of higher education institutions is becoming an international necessity, either within a specific country (for example, the Carnegie classification in the U.S., and the UK typology), or within a whole region (the European classification, for example).

The lack of an Arab regional classification or common framework has implications for all of the following stakeholders:

- **At the research level:** Due to a lack of an empirically developed classification of HEIs, researchers and research agencies are likely to work with an arbitrary selection of higher education institutions in the Arab region, resulting in inconsistent or conflicting results, and unreliable or inappropriate conclusions.
- **At the institutional level:** The lack of a classification scheme for HEIs in the Arab region also limits the prospects of networking, exchange, mobility and cooperation between institutions, in the region and abroad, of similar profiles and characteristics.
- **At the selection level:** The paucity of information on HEIs and their lack of accessibility limits the ability of students and the public to make better informed choices regarding their selection of fields of study and subsequent careers.
- **At the policymaking level:** The lack of precise data on classified higher educational institutions in the Arab region sometimes misleads policymakers and frustrates initiatives for possible cooperation among institutions, regionally and internationally, and creates confusion regarding: transferability of students, faculty mobility, and the establishment of quality standards and regional frameworks for quality assurance.
- **At the industry level:** The current lack of a classification scheme for HEIs in the Arab region also results in insufficient research funding from the industry and the lack of university-industry partnerships. Without a clear understanding of different types of institutions and their features, HEIs are often mischaracterized and the distinction between research-oriented and teaching-oriented institutions is not always evident.

All this makes the establishment of a classification system for higher education in the Arab countries more urgent.

Purpose of the Study

Recognizing a significant need for reliable and standardized institution-level data on higher education institutions (HEIs) in the MENA region, the Institute of International Education (IIE), with support from Carnegie Corporation of New York and in partnership with the Lebanese Association of Educational Studies (LAES), initiated a pilot study in May 2009 to develop a system for classifying HEIs in the region. The selected eight pilot countries included: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and the UAE.¹ It was envisioned that the new classification model for MENA countries would:

- Help strengthen MENA institutions locally by providing benchmarks and key indicators on which institutions could measure and track their growth and compare themselves to similar institutions.
- Generate international interest in the region's institutions, leading to deeper linkages between MENA HEIs and other institutions around the world to facilitate knowledge sharing, research collaboration, and institutional capacity building.
- Provide critical institutional-level information and data that prospective students from the MENA region or from other parts of the world can use to select a higher education institution.

Incorporating elements from existing classifications such as the Carnegie Classification and the European Classification of Higher Educational Institutions, a comprehensive model capturing a wide range of higher education indicators was developed for the current study. Our study yielded the following eleven dimensions that comprise the *Classification Model for the Arab Countries (CMAC)*: institutional characteristics; teaching and learning profile; curriculum; student profile; faculty profile; financial profile; research involvement; cultural orientation; religious orientation; regional engagement; and international engagement. This model formed the basis for a survey of over 300 higher education institutions in the pilot countries. Because there was considerable missing data for some of the dimensions and in the interest of space, this report focuses on six of the eleven dimensions that had reasonably sound responses and were found to be the most reliable and valid.

The current study and its findings are a critical first step in gathering institutional data for the higher education sector in the Arab world that attempts to provide a common standard across countries in the region. Our findings help fill a gap that has been identified by groups ranging from the Regional Board of the Arab Quality Assurance and Accreditation Network for Education (ARQAANE) within the region, to multilateral agencies like UNESCO and the World Bank. Subsequent discussion of the report and refining of the CMAC by higher education leaders and policymakers in the region and at forums such as the recent WISE 2011 in Doha, Qatar, will be vital to the future expansion and scaling up of the initial work carried out through our study.

Key findings from the study include the following:

Paucity of institutional-level data on higher education

There was a lack of data on certain key education indicators across all seven countries in our sample. The missing data was due to one or more of the following reasons: the data in question had either never been collected; had not been organized in a form that could be reported; or institutions were reluctant to provide certain types of information such as details of the institution's funding model. This lack of data was most apparent in the following dimensions in our classification model: research involvement; the teaching and learning profile; the faculty profile; and the financial profile of the institution. Recent

¹ Data for Egypt was not ultimately available due to political events unfolding during the survey period.

research by the World Bank in the region has also noted the lack of data on similar indicators such as the qualifications and accomplishments of teaching staff; indicators of research excellence such as memberships in prestigious academies and societies; and awards received by faculty.

At the student level, there is a shortage of disaggregated data by academic level, and more complete data is needed on student enrollment and graduation rates. Another key indicator for which there was substantial missing data is the international mobility of staff and students, two areas of interest that have also been flagged by the World Bank. For most institutions in our study, the missing mobility data indicates one of two things: there are either no international students and/or teaching staff, or the institution has not measured this type of mobility and academic exchange. This point deserves more discussion. In the Arab region, as in other interconnected regions of the world like Europe and Africa, people are often able to move across borders and within the region without any special documentation that identifies them as “foreign” or “international.” This makes it difficult then to measure student and faculty mobility. If even one Arab country does not view students from a neighboring country as “international,” this leads to a significant undercount of student exchange and mobility for the host country and for the region at large.

A profile of students in the pilot study

Across all seven countries on which data was collected, students were primarily studying at the undergraduate level. In general, there is gender equity in student enrollment, as reported, and co-education is common. However, co-education is interpreted in varying ways: in some countries it simply means that men and women attend the same campus but are segregated in classrooms, while in others it means that the two sexes mingle freely. Citizens make up close to 90 percent of the student body, with the remaining students coming from neighboring Arab countries and other parts of the world. There are some key differences by country, however. The Gulf countries in our study, Qatar and UAE in particular, drew more international students than the other Arab countries.

Shifting cultural models

Given the cultural and political history of the region, most institutions are aligned with a foreign model of education. An institution’s cultural orientation is likely to depend on a number of factors, including language, curriculum organization, and historical affiliation, among others. The French model is most prevalent (45 percent of all HEIs), followed by the American (43 percent), while the other models were in place in just a few institutions. About 6 percent of all institutions have in place a mixed cultural model.

Not surprisingly, certain cultural models are more likely to be prevalent in specific countries. The American one prevails in the Gulf States and Jordan, the French model in North African countries, while HEIs in Lebanon are influenced by more than one cultural model. However, the cultural model of HEIs in the region has evolved over time: the American model has witnessed rapid expansion during the last decade, surpassing the French model which was predominant from 1960-1998. The influence of the American model is seen in academic characteristics such as the structure of courses and the adoption of the semester system. The American influence is also seen most in the Gulf region, probably because Qatar and the UAE are already home to the branch campuses of several American institutions.

It remains to be seen what impact the recent events in the region will have on the cultural model of institutions, but it is likely that the “Arab spring” will certainly affect the governance system of higher education, probably in the direction of more independence, participation, and partnerships—features that are often found in the American model of higher education. But in terms of language, there might be a resurgence of Arabic.

Regional and International engagement

Overall, Arab institutions' involvement at the international level is relatively low. Very few institutions are engaged in various forms of international collaboration such as twinning. Student mobility among Arab countries is also weak, with non-public institutions more likely to host international students than public institutions. Few if any institutions have offices in other countries, and even fewer have on-campus offices of international affairs and offices for visiting students and scholars. Yet there is a critical need for institutions of the region to engage with those outside, especially as they rebuild their societies after the recent political events and begin to engage a newly mobilized youth population. At the recently concluded 2011 annual conference of the European Association for International Education (EAIE), academics, ministers and policymakers from Arab countries emphasized that partnerships between European and "Arab Spring" universities "will be vital to improving higher education in the fledgling democracies...in a period of transition."²

There are some indications, however, that countries within the region are recognizing the need to be more "outward" oriented. This is apparent, for example, in the languages that institutions use for administration and teaching. Contrary to expectation, Arabic alone is used for administrative purposes by less than half of all institutions. An almost equal proportion of institutions rely on a combination of Arabic and a foreign language, likely English or French. And almost a quarter of all institutions rely solely on English as the language of administration. The typical HEI is dichotomous, using two different languages: one for administration and/or teaching humanities and one for teaching hard sciences. While it is not the most prevalent language of instruction, English has increased in popularity since the 1960s—a trend that is probably related to the growth of non-public institutions in the region and emerging systems of higher education in the Gulf States that often include institutions and faculty from overseas.

Despite the overall low levels of higher education internationalization seen in the region, there are notable differences by country and sub-region. The Gulf countries are leading the region in several areas of international engagement. In our study, institutions in both Qatar and UAE had significant proportions of international faculty and students not just from within the Arab region, but also from non-Arab countries. The large presence of foreign faculty in the Gulf States is not surprising, given that these countries are home to foreign branch campuses that have foreign teaching staff. Other demographic factors might also play a role: to begin with, the Gulf States have a larger foreign-born population, including corporate expatriates. Other institutions in the region, such as NYU-Abu Dhabi and the King Abdullah University for Science and Technology (KAUST), have made concerted efforts to hire world-class faculty from around the globe. Not surprisingly, countries with a higher proportion of foreign teaching staff are also the ones with larger populations of foreign students, suggesting openness at the institution-level to engage globally. All of this being said, the motivations for drawing upon an international talent pool are varied: some countries in the region might need to recruit overseas faculty because of a shortage of qualified domestic faculty, while for HEIs in the other countries the recruitment efforts might be part of a carefully articulated strategy to make their institutions world-class, as is the case of Qatar.

Impact of branch campuses on the region

The rapid growth of branch campuses in the region, such as those in Qatar and the UAE, is having an impact on the higher education landscape of the region. Our study points to some interesting trends that are beginning to emerge, some of which have been discussed above, such as the presence of international faculty and students. It should be said that some of these developments or "innovations" are also correlated with the fact that many institutions in the Gulf countries are private institutions. For example, there is increasing use of international admission exams in the Gulf countries, perhaps because these countries have a large number of private institutions, many of which also happen to be international/branch campuses.

² http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2011/09/22/conference_on_europe_and_the_arab_spring

Research support

It is widely acknowledged in the literature and within academic rankings and classifications that the investments an institution makes in fostering research and its research productivity are critical components of academic excellence and competitiveness. To begin with, a large number of institutions in our study were not able to provide detailed data on the types of research facilities and support available. Among those for whom data was available, it appears that overall there is weak institutional investment and engagement in research. There are few research facilities and most institutions provide limited access to print books, e-books, print journals, e-journals, and online databases. Although research activities are taken into consideration in the promotion of faculty members and account for a third of all criteria for making promotion decisions, teaching is given more weight than research and very few staff are active in research. According to one analysis, “In the world’s leading research universities typically some two-thirds of academic staff would be research active, including one third whose research would be internationally reputable.”³ This ratio was not evident in any of the responding countries in the current survey.

Challenges in Carrying out the Study

Although the early phases of data collection proceeded as planned, one of the major hurdles that the research team encountered in carrying out the current study was the reluctance of ministries of education and institutions to participate in an endeavor that would result in a reliable and valid classification system for the region. This was due to a combination of reasons. Many institutions reported that they had never been asked before to provide such data and were not able to do so now. Ministries of education and HEIs in the selected countries were slow and/or reluctant to respond because they were distrustful of an initiative that attempted to in any way classify, assess or rank their institutions; this was especially true for institutions which are strongly linked to central authorities. Even though the study team emphasized the value of the study for the institution/country itself and for raising the quality of higher education in the region, there appears to be widespread concern that the data will be used to expose or critique institutions in the Middle East by trying to compare them with higher quality institutions elsewhere, especially in the U.S. In light of these issues, it is likely that the missing data in the study is for one of two reasons: a lack of transparency on the part of the institution, or the actual unavailability of data on institutional characteristics.

Given the vast diversity of institutions across the seven pilot countries, it was a challenge to construct a classification that would apply to all HEIs in the region. This variation was most apparent in the types of institutions (university, University College, higher institute, business school, higher institute, academy, and community college) and sectors (public, private-nonprofit, private-for profit, and mixed). Some non-public HEIs are even identified as “governmental” and “semi-governmental” or “federal.” Non-public institutions are owned by associations (religious and non-religious), by partnership projects, by economic bodies (central bank, chamber of commerce), or by a diversity of groups. For-profit institutions are mainly established by the private sector, although there are some that are established by governments. In terms of identity, the majority are national institutions, while the others are either regional, foreign or branch of foreign universities, or co-projects.

Other variations have to do with academic requirements as well as the predominant higher education model in place in different institutions. For example, some HEIs use international tests for admission criteria, while others do not. Some use institutional entrance exams for admission purposes, others not. Some HEIs continue to function on an annual calendar of study for the Arts and Sciences, though most have adopted the semester system. However, semesters in Arab institutions do not imply the course credit

³ OECD and the World Bank (2010). *Reviews of National Policies for Higher Education: Higher Education in Egypt*. Paris, France: OECD.

system. A hybrid situation exists in which HEIs may adopt some combination of the American credit system or the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).

A final methodological challenge that we faced was that many of the faculties and departments of an institution are widely dispersed and function almost as independent campuses. As a result, institutional data is not centralized. It fell to the researchers to collate and synthesize data, which presents the challenge of ensuring that the information compiled is representative of an institution as a whole.

Last and perhaps most significant, the progress of the study was affected by the political turmoil that swept through the region and involved almost all countries in the pilot. Not only did this cause a delay in gathering data, but it also resulted in not being able to collect any data from Egypt, a key regional player in higher education.

Recommendations for the Future

Higher education in the MENA region is undergoing a period of rapid change and expansion. Our study and the resulting classification provide the groundwork for further research on developing a common framework that enables a better understanding of the institutions in the region.

The data gathered through our pilot study can be used to conduct in-depth country-level analysis. The data can also be used to further study differences across sub-regions within the larger Arab region. The CMAC assumes certain commonalities and similarities (while accounting of key differences by sector and other criteria), however there is scope to further analyze any sub-regional trends that exist. The data can also be used by HEIs to benchmark themselves within the country and the region.

Finally, although rankings were not the goal of our study, it is conceivable that data from the study can be used to generate rankings of HEIs in the seven pilot countries, especially on the dimensions for which there is more complete and reliable data. This next step would require relative weighting of various indicators, a task that we did not undertake in our analysis as our goal was to present the data in a descriptive way rather than to rank institutions.

In conclusion, it is clear that to develop a comprehensive classification—with more complete information and that could be scaled up to apply to all countries in the region—more time and effort is needed to mobilize countries, ministers, and institutions in the MENA region regarding the importance of gathering high-quality institutional data and of participating in the classifications initiative. Local and regional buy-in is essential or else there is little motivation for governments and institutions to participate and the initiative is viewed as being externally imposed.

One step to mobilize the higher education sector in the region is to share findings from this pilot study at key events in the region with the goal of engaging representatives of the Arab countries that have participated fully in the study as well as representatives of other developing and non-Western countries that have invested in developing classification systems for their higher education sector. One example of this was a highly successful workshop at the recent 2011 WISE conference in Doha, Qatar. The session was attended by over 60 participants from several different countries. There are many good examples from Latin America, Asia, and the former Soviet states of how to develop a shared set of criteria against which to benchmark or compare HEIs, and of how to use this type of institutional data for improving the quality of higher education. Ministers of higher education from the target MENA countries can learn firsthand through the best practices of these other countries that transparency of higher education systems is critical to increasing the quality of higher education in the region, similar to what China set out to do through the Shanghai rankings (now called the Academic Ranking of World Universities or ARWU) which were originally conceived of as a way to improve the quality of Chinese institutions and to position them as world-class.

A current report on higher education in the Arab world would be incomplete without acknowledging the widespread political upheaval in the region and the potential impact of the “Arab Spring” on universities of the region as they reshape themselves to educate a newly mobilized youth population whose understanding of their political, economic, and social reality has changed dramatically. What role universities will play in preparing future leaders and the workforce of tomorrow in the region remains to be seen, but it heightens the need, at the most fundamental level, for solid institutional data and information.

The project directors gratefully acknowledge the assistance of participating HEIs and ministries in the MENA region, as well as individual research coordinators in each country, and the overarching support of Carnegie Corporation, without which the project would not have been possible.

I. INTRODUCTION

The quantitative development of higher education, often referred to as massification, together with the exponential increase in rates of participation, has been a dominant trend in most countries of the world since the last quarter of the 20th century. This trend has brought to focus more than ever before the specific mission and role of higher education institutions (HEIs) in regional development and globalization. Along with massification, the increasing diversity of educational provisions, providers and clientele participating in higher education has prompted initiatives to establish classifications of institutions active in the field, the most common of which are the Carnegie and the European classification systems. The purpose of these classification systems is to provide systematic and internationally comparable data needed to understand the various features of HEIs, and to position them in a more organized and efficient manner on the higher education map.

The expansion and diversity of higher education in the Arab region in terms of types, providers, provisions, and other factors parallels the worldwide growth in higher education. The higher education sector in the region has expanded to include new home institutions as well as branch campuses of overseas institutions. Despite this rapid growth, very little is known about the educational characteristics and features of institutions in the region. Almost no standardized, comparable institutional data exists that can be used to classify, assess and benchmark institutions both within a country and across the region. Yet the need to classify higher education institutions in this region is perhaps more urgent in view of the diversity and contrasts among the Arab states themselves in population size, national wealth and resources, and their human resource needs. A recent OECD report on the region concluded that “the structure of educational systems varies widely among countries, making a framework to collect and report data on educational programs with a similar level of educational content, a clear prerequisite for internationally comparable education statistics and indicators” (OECD, 2010).

While there exist several international-level rankings and as many as 20 country-level rankings and classifications, a classification system of higher education institutions in the MENA region remains to be developed. The urgent need to launch this type of initiative in the region has been expressed by the Regional Board of the Arab Quality Assurance and Accreditation Network for Education (ARQAANE), an international nonprofit association established in Belgium in July 2007 with the fundamental objective of raising the quality of education in the Arab world. More recently, ministers of 57 Islamic states have issued an urgent call for institutions in the Muslim world to develop reliable and transparent indicators for measuring the performance of institutions in the region in an effort to promote innovation and world-class higher education standards (Sawahel, 2011).

Study Goals and Objectives

Against this backdrop of a rapidly growing higher education sector in the Arab world, the purpose of this pilot study was to review the current status of higher education institutions in the Arab countries with the goal of developing a standardized system of classifying these institutions on a range of key academic and research indicators. To be as relevant and meaningful as possible, the development of specific assessment criteria also took into account the unique social, cultural, and academic characteristics and goals of higher education in the MENA region. These criteria can then be used to develop fact-based assessments or classifications of institutions according to each criterion or dimension.

The proposed system was intended to resemble more the Carnegie Classification in the U.S. and the European Classification rather than the U.S. News & World Report rankings or the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU, formerly the Shanghai rankings). Yet classifications and rankings are closely

connected, as is the case with the Carnegie Classification that has informed the *U.S. News and World Report* rankings since 1983, and has also been used widely for higher education research.

Two key advantages of developing a classification or typology for the MENA region that is similar to the Carnegie Classification are that this approach accounts for key differences among higher education institutions, and that classifications help identify meaningful similarities and differences among institutions without necessarily making a judgment about quality. In contrast, by using a reductionist approach, rankings often disregard the fact that higher education institutions can differ significantly in mission, history and size, and that it is often meaningless to reduce these variations into a single score or rank.

It was envisioned that the new classification model for MENA countries would:

- Help strengthen MENA institutions locally by providing benchmarks and key indicators on which institutions could measure and track their growth and compare themselves to similar institutions.
- Generate international interest in the region's institutions, leading to deeper linkages between MENA higher education institutions and other institutions around the world to facilitate knowledge sharing, research collaboration, and institutional capacity building.
- Provide critical institutional-level information and data that prospective students from the MENA region or from other parts of the world can use to select a higher education institution.

Project Partners

The pilot study was carried out by the Institute of International Education, a private not-for-profit organization headquartered in New York City and with over a 1,100 higher education member institutions around the globe, in partnership with the Lebanese Association of Educational Studies (LAES) in Beirut. The study draws upon the Institute's extensive network and expertise in higher education in the MENA region, where our programs aim to improve understanding between the United States and MENA countries, develop leadership in the region, and build capacity among individuals and institutions to address global challenges. The Institute also brings to the project its experience in designing and conducting research on the internationalization of higher education, both within the U.S. and overseas, through *Project Atlas* and the *Open Doors* project, among others.

IIE's partnership with LAES presented an opportunity to collaborate with a regional organization that has expertise in conducting research on higher education in the Arab world, and that has solid outreach within the ministries of education and the higher education sectors of the region. LAES is a nonprofit non-governmental organization that currently includes 54 members, representing academics and researchers in the field of education at Lebanese universities. Since 1995, LAES has been actively engaged in comprehensive research activities and projects conducted on behalf of various sponsors, including Ministries of Education and Higher Education in Lebanon and other Arab countries, UNESCO's Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States, the UNDP, and the World Bank, among others.

While designing the study, the research team also consulted extensively with experts from the fields of Middle Eastern studies, higher education research and policymaking, and higher education rankings and classifications. These included key researchers and academics in the U.S. and in the Arab world; senior staff at Carnegie Corporation, the Ford Foundation in Cairo, and the Social Science Research Council; rankings and classifications experts in the U.S. and Europe; and Ministries of Education in several of the pilot countries. Eight countries in the MENA region were originally selected to participate in this pilot study: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and the United Arab Emirates. Local academics and researchers in each country served as front-line data collectors and national-level

coordinators for the study, interacting with ministry or university officials and administrators. Political changes in Egypt during the survey period made it impossible to collect data in time for this report, which now covers seven of the original countries.

Overview of Report

This final report builds upon the preliminary and descriptive report released in March, 2011. Based on institutional-level data gathered from over 300 HEIs in the seven pilot countries, the current report includes a detailed analysis of the dimensions and indicators included in the newly developed *Classification Model for the Arab Countries (CMAC)*, and overall findings and conclusions based on the classification. Our study yielded the following eleven dimensions that comprise the CMAC: institutional profile; teaching and learning profile; curriculum; student profile; faculty profile; financial profile; research involvement; cultural orientation; religious orientation; regional engagement; and international engagement. Because there was considerable missing data for some of the dimensions and in the interest of space, this report focuses on six of the eleven dimensions that had reasonably sound responses and were found to be the most reliable and valid.

Section II of the report begins with an overview of higher education in the Arab world with a focus on current trends evident in the sector. Sections III and IV describe in detail the design and methodology of the pilot classification study, followed by a description of the rationale and elements of the classification model that was ultimately developed. The fifth and main section of the report presents key findings that make up the classification model. The report concludes with a discussion of key findings, challenges, and recommendations for expanding the work carried out in our pilot study.

II. HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE ARAB WORLD: OVERVIEW & CURRENT TRENDS

During the past decade, higher education in the Arab countries has witnessed a vast number of changes. To a large extent, these changes are a result of policies adopted by Arab governments to expand in this sector, and also of initiatives taken by local, private, and international organizations and universities to involve themselves in higher education in the region. This has led to a considerable expansion in the number of higher education institutions, in the public as well as in the private sector, resulting in a wide range of higher education providers in terms of their affiliation, status, type, nationality, model, cultural references, legality, as well as in the type of programs and degrees offered, quality, and scope of internationalization.

Disparity in Student Enrollment across the Region

Between 1998 and 2008, there was an impressive increase in the number of students in higher education in the Arab countries, from 2.9 million in 1998/1999 to 7.6 million in 2007/2008, a leap of 262 percent. This was a much higher rate of increase than in the total population: from 229.3 million to 319.8 million in the same period (140 percent). The number of students per 100,000 inhabitants rose from 1,294 to 2,379, an increase of 184 percent, and the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) rose from 18 percent to 22 percent. However, there is significant variation in GER within the region which, based on 2008 data, can be classified into three categories (pilot study countries in bold): those with GER above 40 percent (**Jordan**, Kuwait, **Lebanon**, Libya, and Palestine); those with GER between 20 percent and 39 percent (Algeria, Bahrain, **Egypt**, Oman, **Qatar**, **Saudi Arabia**, Syria, **Tunisia**, and UAE); and those with GER below 19 percent (Iraq, Mauritania, **Morocco**, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen).⁴

⁴ *A decade of higher education in Arab states: Achievements and challenges*, UNESCO Regional Report, Cairo, June 1-2, 2009, http://www.educationdev.net/educationdev/Docs/arab_higher_education_report.pdf

Expansion of Institutions

Policies and measures undertaken by Arab governments over the last decade, along with the rising demand for higher education, have led to a considerable expansion in the number of HEIs. In 2009, the number of universities active in the Arab region was 467, compared to a mere 174 a decade ago; i.e. an increase of 2.7 times. If we add other forms of higher education, such as technical institutes, community colleges, teacher-training institutes and others not affiliated to universities or to ministries of higher education, the total number of higher education institutions goes beyond 1,500. There are thus three generations of higher education institutions in the region: the “old generation” established before the 1970s; the “modern generation,” which appeared in the last three decades of the 20th century; and the “new generation,” which was established at the start of the 21st century. It is not surprising that these three generations have different profiles regarding their status (public versus private), their cultural orientation, their size, and the degrees they offer.

Expansion of the Private Higher Education Sector

In terms of sector, the non-public sector comprised only 10 percent of universities in the Arab region in 1998, while ten years later, in 2008, it accounted for more than half of all institutions in the region. In this regard, too, there is significant variation across countries: in some the share of the non-public sector exceeds 80 percent (Bahrain, Lebanon, Palestine, Qatar, the UAE), while it is below 20 percent or even non-existent in others (Algeria, Iraq, Libya, and Morocco). Growth in the number of non-public institutions, however, has not been accompanied by a corresponding growth in student enrollment in such institutions. In 2008, although 51.5 percent of the universities were non-public, they accounted for only 10 percent of the total enrollment. This can partially be explained by the fact that private universities are new and of smaller size, while public institutions are more established and large, but this is not always the case. Table II.1 shows that while five countries have a non-public sector of a large size in terms of universities (60 percent+) as well as in terms of student enrollment (50 percent+), the size of public versus non-public sector is highly disparate. Size and date of establishment seem to be more related to the level of programs offered, as small size and newly established institutions focus primarily on undergraduate programs.

Table II.1: Enrollment in Non-public Universities (Pilot Countries in Bold)

% of students enrolled in non-public universities	% of non-public universities		
	20% and below	21-59%	60% and above
20% and below	Iraq, Morocco, Sudan, Libya,	Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Total Arab Countries	Mauritania, Yemen, Syria, Tunisia,
21-49%			Jordan, Kuwait
50% and above			Bahrain, Oman, UAE, Lebanon, Palestine
NA	Algeria		Qatar

Diversity Looked at from Many Angles

Based on the varied features mentioned above, it is clear that there is great diversity across institutions of higher education in the Arab states: by sector (public, non-public-nonprofit, non-public-profit), by status (universities, independent colleges, higher schools, technical institutes, and community colleges), by type (traditional, open, virtual universities), by nationality (national, regional, international institutions or branches of them), by model (American, French, and German) depending on curriculum organization and language of teaching, by cultural reference (Islamic, Christian, non-religious institutions), by orientation

(profession-oriented, academic-oriented), by legality (recognized institutions vs. diploma-mills), by recognition from respective authorities (licensed, accredited, quality assured institutions and programs), and by selectivity (high selectivity vs. mass universities).

With reference to degrees awarded, the commonly accepted three-level structure of BA/BS- MA/MS- PhD degrees is defined differently in Arab countries both in terms of the number of years or courses required to complete each degree and the designation of the degree. There are also other out-of-the box degrees offered i.e., outside the formal education system. Some are of a preparatory nature, before the BA/BS, some are for one or two years, others are delivered after the BA/BS, without connecting or merging with the MA/MS level (for professional reasons, or re-habilitation, or continuing education, etc.).

The diversity of higher education and lack of standardization of degrees and outcomes has implications for quality. Analysis from within the region and from outside experts has highlighted the fact that quantitative growth of higher education in the last decade has, in many cases, taken place at the expense of quality. Nonetheless, some important steps have been taken to address challenges of quality, among them the reference to international standards and the attempt to engage in other forms of internationalization such as delivering joint degrees, using foreign languages as means of instruction, using international admission tests, or referring to international agencies of quality assurance and to their procedures and criteria for accreditation.

Many of the trends and variations described above can be better appreciated if taken in their historical context. Before the 19th century, the prevailing model of higher education in the region was exclusively the religious one. In the 19th century, Western missionaries brought with them new models of education as vehicles to transmit their respective cultural orientations. These new institutions varied by type and language, depending on where the missionaries came from: Europe (France, Britain, mostly), or the USA. These models were implanted into different localities in the region, depending also on the time and pattern of European colonization. After independence, each Arab State adopted its own policy reflecting the ideological orientation of the new national ruling classes. By the end of the 20th century, with the collapse of the socialist camp, the rise of market ideologies and globalization, and the penetration of information technologies, new shifts took place in higher education, which were expressed mostly in the setting up of private institutions and, more recently, the arrival of foreign universities or their branches.

Implications for a Classification of Institutions in the Region

What is striking about all these changes is that none of the new models has eliminated the previous ones completely. As a result, higher education in the Arab countries nowadays is complex and takes disparate forms. Such a situation leads to some confusion in the ranks of Arab educators themselves, as well as among international observers, particularly in terms of meanings and equivalences. As an example, an agreement on degree recognition among Arab countries was signed in 1978 by 14 countries (out of 22), regarding first-level degrees (BA/BS). This agreement, however, was not reevaluated, nor its impact and implementation assessed, despite the profound changes that have taken place in these countries over the last few decades.

From an international perspective, the varying nature of higher education institutions and degrees in the region has consequences for the way international agencies and higher education institutions can relate to credentials issued in the Arab countries. This is a challenging issue particularly as students' mobility from Arab countries towards the U.S. and other OECD countries has taken a significant leap in recent years. According to the Institute of International Education's *Open Doors* report, out of a world total of 723,277 foreign students in the USA in 2010/11, 47,963 or seven percent were from the MENA region, an increase of 24 percent over the previous year. In the meantime, classification of higher education institutions is becoming an international necessity, either within a specific country (Carnegie

classification in USA, UK typology), or within a whole region (European classification). All this makes the establishment of a classification system for higher education in the Arab countries more urgent.

Because of the absence of Arab regional classification, providers and receivers of higher education in the Arab countries used to deal with one another on a case-by-case basis. Obviously, this put a heavy load on all sides involved. One form of arrangement is found in a North-South type of relationship, where the stronger side imposes its diploma classification and content on the weaker side, as is the case with France and Arab North African countries, for instance. Another form of arrangement is found among individual Arab countries through special agreements. All these arrangements are still ad-hoc remedies for a more fundamental problem that needs be addressed and that it likely to be exacerbated as Arab states become increasingly involved in globalization, individually or collectively.

Other consequences resulting from the current situation of higher education in the Arab region can be noted at the following levels:

- **At the research level:** Due to a lack of empirically developed classifications of HEIs, researchers and research agencies are likely to work with an arbitrary selection of higher educational institutions in the Arab region, resulting in inconsistent or conflicting results, and unreliable or inappropriate conclusions.
- **At the institutional level:** The lack of a classification scheme for HEIs in the Arab region also limits the prospects of networking, exchange, mobility and cooperation between institutions, in the region and abroad, of similar profiles and characteristics.
- **At the selection level:** The paucity of information on HEIs and their lack of accessibility limits the ability of students and the public to make better informed choices regarding their selection of fields of study and subsequent careers.
- **At the policymaking level:** The lack of precise data on classified higher educational institutions in the Arab region sometimes misleads policymakers and frustrates initiatives for possible cooperation among institutions, regionally and internationally, and creates confusion regarding: transferability of students, faculty mobility, and the establishment of quality standards and regional frameworks for quality assurance;
- **At the industry level:** The current lack of a classification scheme for HEIs in the Arab region also results in insufficient research funding from the industry and the lack of university-industry partnerships. Without a clear understanding of different types of institutions and their features, HEIs are often mischaracterization and the distinction between research-oriented and teaching-oriented institutions is not always evident.

Based on the above, there is a need to establish an empirically developed classification of higher education to ensure common understanding, comparability and compatibility between regional types of institutions, as well as between regional and international classifications and terminology of higher education in Arab countries.

III. STUDY DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

Being the first of its kind, the current study was designed to be a pilot with the goal of developing a reliable and valid higher education classification which could, in the future, be scaled up and applied to all countries in the region. The eight countries in the pilot were therefore selected to represent the diversity of the region, with the synonymous terms “MENA region” or “Arab world” encompassing countries in both North Africa and the Gulf region. Following extensive consultations both in the U.S. and in the MENA region with experts in Middle Eastern studies and higher education classifications and ranking systems, the countries eventually selected were: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and the United Arab Emirates.⁵ In each of the countries the study was carried out at two complementary levels, one that focused on the status and characteristics of higher education at the national level, and the second at the institutional level. This two-pronged view helped provide a better understanding of the higher education map in the region in order to establish a solid baseline for comparability with global conditions and trends.

Developing the Classification Model for the Arab Countries (CMAC)

The literature on classification systems of higher education was reviewed to identify the major existing systems and the methodology used in their development. Two internationally-known classification systems—the *Carnegie Classification* and the *European Classification of Higher Education Institutions*—were selected for further analysis. Although the UNESCO classification model was also reviewed, it does not relate to the classification of higher education institutions. However, some of the definitions of the indicators from the UNESCO model, such as fields of study, were used in the development of the model.

The European and Carnegie systems were selected for a number of reasons. First, both systems are internationally recognized and were used in the development of many national classification systems. Second, the two classification systems have undergone rigorous development and validation. Third, the European system applies to an entire region and therefore has particular relevance for the current study that focuses on the Arab region. The two selected systems were analyzed in order to compare and contrast their approaches and to identify the common dimensions between them and assess their relevance to the Arab countries.

Building upon the elements of the European and Carnegie classifications, additional dimensions were included to capture the diversity in the Arab case and because some features are unique to the Arab culture and countries. The dimensions, indicators, and measures taken together yielded the pilot version of the Classification Model for the Arab Countries (CMAC), which is summarized in table III.1.

Survey of institutions

The CMAC was used as a framework to develop the questionnaire to be sent to the HEIs in the eight Arab countries, chosen as a sample in this study. A draft of the questionnaire was pilot tested with a small group of institutions in the sampled countries in May 2010 to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the questionnaire items and to assess the availability of the data requested. The final draft of the questionnaire adopted was made available in both English and Arabic versions. A crosswalk that linked the questionnaire items with the model indicators was also developed.

⁵ Egypt was ultimately not included in the study for reasons explained elsewhere in this report, related largely to the challenge of data collection during a period of dramatic political transformation.

Table III.1: Classification Model for the Arab Countries (CMAC), Dimensions and Indicators

#	Dimension	Examples of types of Indicators
1	Institutional characteristics	Size and age of institution; public or private; academic level: undergraduate and/or graduate and professional.
2	Teaching and Learning Profile	Staff size and the teaching and learning environment; faculty-student ratio; and qualifications of faculty members.
3	Curriculum	This dimension was included because of the diversity in curricula and organization in Arab universities. Some use the semester, while others use the academic year as a basis for organizing the school year. Some universities use the credit (American and European) and some use the course as a unit of study. Includes number and types of degrees offered; range of academic fields taught.
4	Student Profile	The characteristics, attributes and abilities of incoming students; diversity of student body; student retention, completion and graduation rates.
5	Faculty Profile	There is a considerable variation among Arab universities in terms of faculty qualifications, employment status, and gender distribution. This dimension was introduced to capture such diversity.
6	Financial Profile	Arab universities differ in the manner and sources of their funding. Although the great majority depends almost completely on governmental funds, there are others that are tuition-based or a combination of the two. Includes overall financial and material resources available to the institution (research funding, endowment, annual level of support from government, tuition fees, and alumni giving).
7	Research Involvement	Institutional investments in research and research productivity; faculty production, faculty Arab and foreign publication, refereed and non- refereed publication, research centers and libraries
8	Cultural Orientation	This also is a dimension that is unique to Arab universities. Because of historical and cultural reasons, Arab universities follow different models such as the Islamic, Arab, American, French and sometimes a combination of these or other new ones. Includes language of instruction and administration.
9	Religious Orientation	This is a dimension unique to Arab universities. Historically, some of the well-known universities in the region started as religious institutions. The emphasis on religion varies from one institution to another or from one country to another in terms of ownership, degree of emphasis on religious aspects in the programs, and extent of employing clerics on the faculty.
10	Regional Engagement	This dimension draws upon the European Classification of Higher Education Institutions. The European model was developed for a European region and this dimension is relevant to the Arab region which includes independent states. Moreover, there are Arab universities in some countries that have branches in other Arab countries. Also this dimension includes legal identity, regional students and staff, twinning, cooperation agreements and intended regional engagement.
11	International Engagement	Based on the European Classification of Higher Education Institutions, this dimension is relevant because there are universities in the Arab countries which are branches of American and European universities. Also, some Arab universities have international students and faculty, and also attempt to send their domestic students and faculty overseas on exchange programs. Other indicators include international collaborations, twinning programs and resources available for foreign faculty and students on campus, institutional and programmatic accreditation and use of international admission tests, etc.

IV. DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

Data collection was designed to be undertaken by National Coordinators (NCs) assigned to each of the pilot countries, who were commissioned for the task by LAES. NCs represented indigenous social science researchers, in some cases faculty from HEIs, who were knowledgeable about the higher education sector of their respective countries. The study was carried out in the following phases: in the **preparatory phase**, the NC prepared a list of all higher institutions in the country, affiliated with the Ministry which is responsible for higher education, classified by sector and category or type (university, institute, etc.). In **phase I**, the NC partially completed the questionnaires for all the HEIs in the country, based on desk research and secondary data available from the Ministry of Higher Education and other sources. In **phase II**, the NCs sent the filled questionnaires to their respective institutions, requesting the institutions to validate the existing information and to complete the remaining sections and items. Once the preliminary version of the classification was developed, it was reviewed and vetted by a regional advisory group comprising higher education experts and policy analysts who carefully reviewed the proposed classification for its accuracy and regional relevance.

To begin with, 643 institutions across the eight countries were selected for inclusion in the study. With the 216 Egyptian institutions excluded from this mix, our final population of institutions was 427, of which 300 participated in the study—a 70 percent response rate. However, despite this overall strong response rate, the response rate across individual questions and indicators varied considerably. Therefore, in the interest of space and to present findings that are most reliable and valid, this report focuses on the six dimensions (and their indicators) that had reasonably sound responses. Table IV.1 shows the number of institutions that were included in the study in each of the seven pilot countries.⁶ Overall response rates were lowest in Morocco and Saudi Arabia.

Table IV.1: Distribution of Higher Education Institutions in Study Sample by Country

Country	No of HEIs	No. of responding institutions	Response rate (%)
Jordan	37	33	89.2
Lebanon	41	41	100.0
Morocco	153	68	44.4
Saudi Arabia	49	24	49.0
Tunisia	71	71	100.0
Qatar	13	12	92.3
UAE	63	51	81.0
Total	427	300	70.3

V. FINDINGS

This section of the report presents key findings for the following six of the eleven dimensions covered by the study and included in the classification: institutional characteristics; curriculum; student profile; cultural orientation; regional engagement; and international engagement. While the findings below focus on these select dimensions and their indicators, the full classification developed for the study, based on 77 indicators and eleven dimensions, will be available in a forthcoming technical report. Although this classification is intended to apply to all seven countries, we point out specific country-level trends or findings where interesting and relevant.

⁶ A forthcoming technical report will include a list of all surveyed institutions.

Dimension 1: Institutional Characteristics

This dimension focused on basic institutional characteristics such as the type of institution; its age and size; public or private sector; and the academic level: undergraduate and/or graduate and professional.

Type of institution

One of the first steps in developing a higher education classification is to identify a common typology that facilitates comparisons across similar types of institutions. Our research revealed a wide range of institutions in the pilot countries, including a “university,” a “university college,” a “college,” a “higher institute,” school, community college, academy, etc. The difference between the types of institutions was not always clear. In order to take into account the different types of HEIs, we examined them individually in each country, taking into account official definitions. The descriptions provided in each country were also compared with ISCED definitions to ultimately arrive at a classification that accurately and comprehensively describes the institutions in the region. Our classification yielded the following four categories:

- Universities, with the criteria of including at least three faculties/colleges/institutes;
- University colleges, usually with fewer than three affiliated colleges or faculties and concentrated in specific fields of studies;
- Higher institutes with a professional orientation; and
- Community colleges, typically delivering associate degrees and/or a diploma.

Based on these four categories, the responding HEIs in the seven countries were classified as shown in table V.1.

Table V.1: Type of Institution by Country

Country	Type								Total
	University		University college		Higher institute		Community college		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Jordan	29	87.9	3	9.1	1	3.0	0	0	33
Lebanon	32	78.0	5	12.2	4	9.8	0	0	41
Morocco	16	23.5	0	0	52	76.5	0	0	68
Saudi Arabia	24	100.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	24
Tunisia	21	29.6	1	1.4	49	69.0	0	0	71
Qatar	3	25.0	8	66.7	1	8.3	0	0	12
UAE	22	43.1	20	39.2	5	9.8	4	7.8	51
Total	147	49.0	37	12.3	112	37.3	4	1.3	300

Close to half of all institutions across the seven countries are universities. In Jordan and Lebanon over 60 percent of all institutions are universities; in Saudi Arabia all institutions are universities. The second most prevalent institutional type is the “higher institute,” accounting for more than a third of all HEIs in the seven countries. University colleges constitute 12 percent of all institutions, with a larger presence in Qatar and the UAE. The community college model is a relatively new development and is found only in the UAE.

Qatar and UAE are home to several branch campuses of foreign institutions. While these cross-border institutions are regarded as universities by the home institution (either in the U.S. or elsewhere), they are typically limited to one or two disciplines or fields (with the exception of Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar), and do not fit the definition of a university that typically offers a much broader range of disciplines and degrees. Therefore they were classified as university colleges.

Sector: public and non-public

HEIs could be grouped into two broad categories, public and non-public. However, there is considerable variation in the term “non-public,” with some being for-profit and others being nonprofit. Just under half of the surveyed institutions fall within the public sector, with more public institutions found in Morocco, and the least in Lebanon and UAE (table V.2).

The non-public sector is quite diversified, with some HEIs called “private”, and some called “Ahlih” meaning nonprofit. In Lebanon nonprofit institutions are called “private” too. In the UAE some are not public but identified as “governmental”⁷ and “semi-governmental”⁸ or “federal.” The situation is mixed in other countries⁹, too, where non-public institutions are partly initiated and/or supported by the government and managed (or partly supported) by a third party (religious or economic organization).

Cross-border institutions or branch campuses in Qatar reflect a new model of the relationships between institutions and different stakeholders. These HEIs are branches of international institutions, invited and assisted by local government. The equation is simple: the institutions bring with them their academic assets (curriculum, organization, and faculty) and are responsible for managing their own affairs, while the government covers the operating expenses. The Qatari government, for example, has made these investments in an attempt to offer a world-class education through the establishment of Education City. The branch campuses serve local, regional, and international students.

Taking into account the diversity of institutions and their sources of support, we reclassified the institutions into the following categories:

- Public institution, where the HEI belongs totally to the public sector
- Private institution, where the HEI institution belongs to the non-public sector, is owned by a private company and acts as a for-profit institution
- Private nonprofit institution, where the institution belongs to the private sector, yet is owned by an association (religious or not) or by a local or regional entity (such as the Chamber of Commerce, Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations –AGFUND, and others), and declares itself as being a nonprofit.
- Mixed sector, where the institution is initiated by the government (owner) while run as an independent private institution, reflecting a public-private partnership between government and private sector, and usually operating on a nonprofit basis.
- Cross border institution, where the institution is initiated by an international HEI and supported financially by the government, usually on a nonprofit basis.

⁷ Imam Malik College for Islamic Sharia and Law, Vocational Education and Training Institute -Abu Dhabi

⁸ Biotechnology University College (Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce & Industry)

⁹ In Qatar: Qatar faculty of Islamic Studies, in Morocco: Al-Akawayn University

Using these five categories, HEIs in the seven countries can be classified as follows (table V.2).

Table V.2: Sector Classification by Country

Country	Sector classification										Total
	Public		Private non-profit/Ahlihah		Private		Mixed sector		Cross border		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Jordan	10	30.3	4	12.1	17	51.5	1	3.0	1	3.0	33
Lebanon	1	2.4	33	80.5	7	17.1	0	.0	0	.0	41
Morocco	67	98.5	0	.0	0	.0	1	1.5	0	.0	68
Saudi Arabia	24	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	24
Tunisia	37	52.1	0	.0	34	47.9	0	.0	0	.0	71
Qatar	3	25.0	0	.0	1	8.3	1	8.3	7	58.3	12
UAE	3	5.9	2	3.9	33	64.7	9	17.6	4	7.8	51
Total	145	48.3	39	13.0	92	30.7	12	4.0	12	4.0	300

Almost half of the HEIs are public and most of the rest are “private”, with 13 percent being private nonprofit. The public sector prevails in Morocco, the private nonprofit in Lebanon, the cross border in Qatar, and the “mixed” category is found mainly in the UAE.¹⁰

In Qatar, the following cross-border institutions completed the questionnaires: Carnegie Mellon University, Northwestern University, Texas A&M University, Virginia Commonwealth University, Weill Cornell Medical College, College of the North Atlantic, and University of Calgary. In addition, Qatar has three public institutions: Qatar University, Qatar Aeronautical College, and Ahmed Ben Mohamed Military College. It has also one local for-profit institution (Stenden University) and one mixed institution (Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies).

Dimension 2: Curriculum

This dimension was designed to capture the diversity in curricula and its organization in Arab universities. Some use the semester, while others use the academic year as a basis for organizing the school year. Some universities use the credit system (American or European) and some use the course as a unit of study. This dimension also included the number and types of degrees offered, and the range of academic fields taught.

Organization of undergraduate curriculum

The majority of institutions (88 percent) use the semester system, followed by the annual/year system (6 percent), with some institutions (7 percent) following a combination of semester and annual programs. As shown in table V.3, the semester system is the only system available in most countries except for Lebanon and Tunisia, where the annual and mixed systems still exist in a quarter to a third of the HEIs.

¹⁰ The private sector was not covered in Saudi Arabia.

Table V.3: Organization by Year vs. Semester, by Country

Country	Year vs. semester						Total
	Semester		Annual		Semester & annual		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Jordan	33	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	33
Lebanon	30	73.2	6	14.6	5	12.2	41
Morocco	68	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	68
Saudi Arabia	24	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	24
Tunisia	45	63.4	11	15.5	15	21.1	71
Qatar	11	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	11
UAE	51	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	51
Total	262	87.6	17	5.7	20	6.7	299

Credit vs. subject matter (American or European credit vs. subjects)

As might be expected, teaching units are organized differently across the seven countries. There is the credit system (69.4 percent), the subject matter system (28.3 percent), and a combination of both (2.4 percent). The credit system is most prevalent in university colleges and community colleges, while the subject matter system is found primarily in the higher institutes. Universities tend to have in place both systems.

Based on the considerable variations in the credit systems adopted, and the fact that neither of these credit systems aligns perfectly with whether the institution is based on a semester or academic year system, we developed the following classification:

- American system (and other equivalent systems like Canadian and Australian), where the curriculum is divided into semesters and where teaching units are courses and credits;
- European system (Licence, Master, Doctorat or LMD), where curriculum is divided into semesters and teaching units are ECTS;
- Old European system of year organization and subject matter;
- Combined system, which includes elements of all of the above within the same institution.

Table V.4 reflects the distribution of institutions according to this classification and by country.

Table V.4: Curriculum Model by Country

Country	Type of curriculum								Total Responding
	American system		European system		Old European system		Combined system		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Jordan	33	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	33
Lebanon	24	58.5	4	9.8	5	12.2	8	19.5	41
Morocco	1	1.5	0	.0	0	.0	67	98.5	68
Saudi Arabia	24	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	24
Tunisia	0	.0	43	60.6	4	5.6	24	33.8	71
Qatar	9	81.8	1	9.1	0	.0	1	9.1	11
UAE	43	84.3	3	5.9	0	.0	5	9.8	51
Total	134	44.8	51	17.1	9	3.0	105	35.1	299

Within the credit system, the primary systems in use are the American and/or Canadian (134 HEIs), the European ECTS (51 HEIs), and a combination of the two (105 HEIs). The American credit system prevails in Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and UAE, the ECTS in Tunisia, and a combined system in Morocco. The fact that a third of all institutions are using a hybrid system suggests that they are either in transition (for example, from the old European system to the new one) or that they have deliberately adopted this duality to account for the diversity of pressures.

The hypothesis that institutions in the region are in a process of transition, often from what are regarded as old and outdated systems to more contemporary systems, is also supported by additional findings. Most HEIs that currently have a combined or hybrid system were established in 1960-1998 (66 percent), which likely indicates that these institutions are in the process of making the transition to either the American or the new European system; those that are relatively “newer,” that is established in the last decade, were more likely to have adopted the American and European systems from the start (69 percent and 67 percent, respectively). Furthermore, data reveal that the public sector appears to have adopted more the combined system (54.5 percent), while the non-public sector is more oriented towards the American system (62 percent). The European system is found almost equally within public and non-public HEIs (18.6 percent and 15.6 percent respectively).

Types of requirements (undergraduates)

HEIs were asked to provide information about the extent to which the following types of requirements exist for undergraduate programs: university requirements, faculty/program requirements, major requirements, free elective requirements, and other requirements. For the analysis and the classification we ultimately focused on the first three. Using a three-level scale, HEIs were classified as follows:

- **Institutionally oriented** in terms of degree requirements, when the institution has a high percentage of institution requirements;
- **Faculty oriented** in terms of degree requirements, when the institution has a high percentage of faculty requirements¹¹;
- **Major oriented** in terms of degree requirements, when the institution has a high percentage of major requirements; and
- **Mixed orientation**, where no single requirement dominates.

Classification of HEIs according to these criteria shows that the most common model of degree requirements is the “major oriented” (51 percent), followed by the “faculty oriented” (17 percent), then by the “Institution oriented” (9 percent) (table V.5). The major orientation is more frequent in Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia and Saudi Arabia, faculty orientation in Lebanon, and mixed orientation in Qatar and the UAE.

¹¹ It should be noted that in the current context “faculty” refers to the department of study or unit of teaching (such as the Faculty of Humanities) as opposed to teaching staff.

Table V.5: Requirements Orientation by Country

Country	Requirements orientation								Total Responding
	Institution oriented		Faculty oriented		Major oriented		Mixed orientation		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Jordan	0	.0	0	.0	33	100.0	0	.0	33
Lebanon	2	6.3	18	56.3	3	9.4	9	28.1	32
Morocco	2	33.3	1	16.7	3	50.0	0	.0	6
Saudi Arabia	0	.0	0	.0	24	100.0	0	.0	24
Tunisia	2	14.3	1	7.1	7	50.0	4	28.5	14
Qatar	1	20.0	2	40.0	0	.0	2	40.0	5
UAE	6	18.2	3	9.1	5	15.2	19	57.6	33
Total	13	8.8	25	17.0	75	51.0	34	23.1	147

Graduation requirements

The number of credits required for a degree depends on the number of years of study and the credit system adopted. In most HEIs, an undergraduate degree lasts between two and three years (162 institutions). In the American system the number of credits required is usually 30 per year, although it might be higher (with one medical institution requesting 206 credits in 5 years). In the European system the number of credits is usually 60 ECTS. But there are again some exceptions: in Tunisia an institution with a three-year program requires only 45 ECTS, while an institution in Lebanon requires 180 ECTS for its four-year program.

As table V.6 indicates, at the graduate or postsecondary level, a total of 132 HEIs provide master's degrees that range from two years to six years (in the case of a medical institution in the UAE). The number of credits in master's degrees varies widely between HEIs, as well as the number of years to complete the degree. Most HEIs (76 percent) require a thesis to graduate with a master's degree.

Table V.6: HEIs by Degrees Provided and by Country

Country	Associates degree	BA/BS	MA/MS	PhD
Jordan	1	31	15	7
Lebanon	0	39	26	8
Morocco	0	17	22	18
Saudi Arabia	0	24	13	8
Tunisia	0	63	32	12
Qatar	0	5	3	0
UAE	3	28	21	4
Total	4	207	132	57

Only 57 HEIs provide PhD degrees (table V.6) and the length of the degree is from two to five years, with most averaging three years (74 percent). The number of credits required varies between a low of 15 to a high of 540. Although the "residency" system did not appear to be clearly understood by most HEIs, given that it is an American feature, 30 of the HEIs that responded to this question reported that they follow this system, whereas 14 stated that they don't require residency for the PhD.

Dimension 3: Student Profile

This dimension was constructed to develop a comprehensive profile of students on campus, including the characteristics, attributes and abilities of incoming students; diversity of the student body; and student retention, completion, and graduation rates.

Size of student body

As may be expected, there is significant variation in the size of the student body on the campuses included in the study. There were a total of 1.98 million students across the 234 campuses that reported this data. There were 22 HEIs with less than 100 students each. All were non-public, and located in Tunisia and the UAE. On the other hand, there were seven HEIs with more than 50,000 students each, all public, one in Lebanon and 6 in Saudi Arabia, as shown below.

Table V.7: HEIs with More than 50,000 Students

Country	Name of HEI	Total students
Lebanon	Lebanese University	72,323
Saudi Arabia	Umm Al-Qura University	53,201
	King Saud University	77,492
	King Abdulaziz University	86,107
	King Khalid University	70,198
	Taibah University	52,853
	University of Dammam	54,829

As table V.8 indicates, institutions were classified into: very small, small, medium, large and very large based on the size of their student body. The table also shows the distribution of institutions, based on student size, across the seven countries. Small HEIs are found primarily in Lebanon, Qatar, the UAE, and Tunisia, while those that are large are found primarily in Morocco and Saudi Arabia. Overall, there were 18 very large institutions, each of which enrolled over 30,000 students. Half of these institutions were in Saudi Arabia.

Table V.8: Institutions by Size of Student Body and by Country

Country											Total Responding
	Very small (500 students or less)		Small (500< to 5,000)		Medium (5,000< to 15,000)		Large (15,000< to 30,000)		Very large (30,000<)		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Jordan	2	7.4	10	37.0	9	33.3	4	14.8	2	7.4	27
Lebanon	9	24.3	18	48.6	8	21.6	1	2.7	1	2.7	37
Morocco	0	.0	1	6.7	5	33.3	7	46.7	2	13.3	15
Saudi Arabia	0	.0	1	4.2	4	16.7	10	41.7	9	37.5	24
Tunisia	29	40.8	31	43.7	1	1.4	6	8.5	4	5.6	71
Qatar	8	72.7	2	18.2	1	9.1	0	.0	0	.0	11
UAE	25	51.0	19	38.8	4	8.2	1	2.0	0	.0	49
Total	73	31.2	82	35.0	32	13.7	29	12.4	18	7.7	234

Gender profile

Gender parity

Female students constitute half the total enrollment in all HEIs (49.9 percent). The ratio varies between 0 in some and 100 percent in others, meaning that there are some HEIs for females only and others for males only. HEIs were classified into three categories according to their proportions of women students: less than 40 percent, between 40 and 60 percent, and more than 60 percent. Data shows that in 31 percent of the HEIs the percentage of females is less than 40 percent; while in 29 percent of them, females constitute more than 60 percent (table V.9).

In terms of sector, the gender distribution shows that women have a larger presence in public institutions than in non-public sector (table V.9). The likely reason for this is that most families prefer to send their daughters to HEIs that are free of tuition and that are sanctioned and approved by the state.

The country where gender equity prevails is Morocco, followed by Lebanon (table V.10). In Tunisia, Qatar, and the UAE the mean average of the percentage of women in higher education is around 50 percent.

Table V.9: Percent of Female Students by Sector

Sector	Female student percentage						Total Responding
	40% and below		40-60%		more than 60%		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Public	11	12.5	41	46.6	36	40.9	88
Non-public	61	43.3	50	35.5	30	21.3	141
Total	72	31.4	91	39.7	66	28.8	229

Table V.10: Percent of Female Students by Country

Country	Female student percentage						Total Responding
	40% and below		40-60%		more than 60%		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Jordan	14	53.8	9	34.6	3	11.5	26
Lebanon	13	35.1	19	51.4	5	13.5	37
Morocco	2	16.7	10	83.3	0	0	12
Saudi Arabia	2	8.3	6	25.0	16	66.7	24
Tunisia	19	27.1	28	40.0	23	32.9	70
Qatar	4	36.4	3	27.3	4	36.4	11
UAE	18	36.7	16	32.7	15	30.6	49
Total	72	31.4	91	39.7	66	28.8	229

Students' gender mix

The majority of institutions are co-educational, with only six in the Gulf States being limited to a single gender. However, what constitutes co-education varies across countries. In some (Saudi Arabia, for example), there are separate campuses for men and women; in others, men and women mix in courtyards, but are seated separately in classrooms; and yet in others (Lebanon, Jordan and Morocco), the two genders intermingle freely. Based on these variations, we developed one composite descriptor to capture these differences:

- No gender mix (two separate campuses)
- One campus with gender separation
- Gender mix exists in classes (both genders sit in the same classroom separately or next to each other).

It was found across all seven countries that the prevailing pattern is that of a wide gender mix. Among the HEIs which provide co-education, 247 out of 294 (85 percent) provide gender mix in classes, 14 in one campus but with the two genders segregated (4.8 percent), and 31 (10.5 percent) with two separate campuses. Therefore we merge the latter two categories into one, labeled “no gender mix.” All these are found in Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Undergraduate & Graduate Enrollment

Enrollment at HEIs encompasses those who enrolled in BA/BS, MA/MS, or PhD programs, and in other diplomas. For the purpose of our analyses, we focused on the undergraduate and graduate enrollment; MA/MS degrees and the Ph.D. were combined together into graduate studies. The total number of students covered by the study is 1.52 million students, with 91 percent (1.38 million) at the undergraduate level and the rest at the graduate level.

On average, the majority of institutions in the seven countries enroll students at the undergraduate level, with Bachelor’s students comprising upwards of 75 percent of the student body (table V.11). The proportion of undergraduates is highest in Saudi Arabia.

Table V.11: Mean average of Enrollment at Undergraduate and Graduate Levels by Country

Country	N	Mean	
		% undergraduates	% graduates
Jordan	25	90.3939	9.6061
Lebanon	24	80.4136	19.5864
Morocco	14	86.7140	13.2860
Saudi Arabia	20	95.0132	4.9868
Tunisia	12	85.7765	14.2235
Qatar	7	85.3166	14.6834
UAE	39	76.6418	23.3582
Total	141	84.5361	15.4639

Based on further analysis, institutions were classified into those with an “undergraduate orientation” (70 percent), a “graduate orientation” (15 percent), or a “mixed orientation” (15 percent) (table V.12). HEIs in Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Qatar are predominantly enrolling students at institutions largely oriented towards undergraduates. HEIs oriented more towards graduate studies are found in Lebanon and the UAE. In Morocco and Tunisia, students are primarily enrolled at institutions with an undergraduate or mixed orientation.

Table V.12: HEIs by Primary Orientation (Academic Level) and by Country

Country	Level of studies orientation						Total Responding
	Undergraduate orientation		Mixed orientation		Graduate orientation		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Jordan	19	76.0	3	12.0	3	12.0	25
Lebanon	15	62.5	4	16.7	5	20.8	24
Morocco	9	64.3	4	28.6	1	7.1	14
Saudi Arabia	17	85.0	3	15.0	0	.0	20
Tunisia	6	50.0	5	41.7	1	8.3	12
Qatar	6	85.7	0	.0	1	14.3	7
UAE	26	66.7	3	7.7	10	25.6	39
Total	98	69.5	22	15.6	21	14.9	141

Institutions' selectivity in admitting undergraduate students

Among institutions for whom admissions statistics were available for the academic year 2009-10, the total number of applicants was 292,591, with an average acceptance rate of 60.3 percent. These admission rates were transformed into Z-scores, resulting in a classification that ranged from highly selective institutions where less than 37 percent of applying students were accepted, to low selectivity where 97 percent to 100 percent of applying students were admitted.

The sector to which an institution belongs does not seem to make a difference with regard to selectivity. The extremely selective HEIs constitute one quarter, which is a considerable percentage. These results however should be interpreted with caution, since in some countries selection in the public sector is performed at the national level (Ministries of Higher Education), where HEIs have no role to play. They just "receive" the students accepted by central authorities. This applies to both Jordan and Tunisia.

Table V.13: HEIs by Their Level of Selectivity and by Country

Country	Level of selectivity in admitting undergraduate students						Total Responding
	Low %		Medium %		High %		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Jordan	0	.0	1	100.0	0	.0	1
Lebanon	4	20.0	12	60.0	4	20.0	20
Morocco	0	.0	1	33.3	2	66.7	3
Saudi Arabia	2	16.7	6	50.0	4	33.3	12
Qatar	6	66.7	3	33.3	0	.0	9
UAE	8	22.9	16	45.7	11	31.4	35
Total	20	25.0	39	48.8	21	26.2	80

General requirements for acceptance

HEIs were asked about the following kinds of requirements for admission: secondary education diploma; national test; international exam; institutional exam; and other requirements.

Almost all HEIs reported that a *secondary education diploma* is required. Therefore we consider this diploma as a baseline condition or minimum requirement for admission. The question is whether there is a grade level (or a point average) in this diploma expected, or if there are additional conditions required for admission. 188 HEIs reported requesting a minimum average grade, and 63 HEIs said they don't require such an average. Typically, the more selective the institution (as indicated by a low percentage of accepted students), the higher the grade required in official exams.

There is no *national test* in most countries involved in this study.¹² The exception is Saudi Arabia, where a national general proficiency test is administered by the Ministry of Higher Education for high school graduates as a requirement for admission in Saudi governmental universities.¹³ Another exception is in the UAE, where some HEIs use national placement exam (CEPA) results in their admission procedures¹⁴.

Overall, 156 (66.4 percent) institutions do not use *international test* results for admissions decisions, while 79 (33.6 percent) said they use such results (table V.14). Among institutions using international tests, the TOEFL is the most frequently used. The use of international exams appears to be correlated with the dominant sector in a country. Institutions in countries with a predominantly public higher education sector (Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia) are less likely to rely on international exams for admissions. On the other hand, these exams are more common in Qatar and the UAE, perhaps because these countries have a large number of private institutions many of which happen to be international branch campuses.

Table V.14: International Exams by Sector and by Country

	Sector & country	No international admission exam		International admission exam		Total
		N	%	N	%	
Sector						
	Public	106	95.5	5	4.5	111
	Non-public	50	40.3	74	59.7	124
	Total	156	66.4	79	33.6	235
Country						
	Jordan	12	100.0	0	.0	12
	Lebanon	22	53.7	19	46.3	41
	Morocco	67	98.5	1	1.5	68
	Saudi Arabia	14	82.4	3	17.6	17
	Tunisia	36	100.0	0	.0	36
	Qatar	2	18.2	9	81.8	11
	UAE	3	6.0	47	94.0	50
	Total	156	66.4	79	33.6	235

¹² National tests are distinct from national exit exams for secondary schools; the latter exist in most countries.

¹³ http://www.effatuniversity.edu.sa/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=326&Itemid=521

¹⁴ "The Common Educational Proficiency Assessment (CEPA) exams began as a joint venture between the National Admissions and Placement Office (NAPO) in the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and the three higher education institutions in the United Arab Emirates – the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT) and Zayed University (ZU). Implemented in 2006, CEPA was developed to facilitate the placement of students for English language and math study purposes across the three higher education institutions"

<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/uae/education/what-is-the-common-educational-proficiency-assessment-cepa-1.131957>

An almost equal proportion of institutions reported using institutional entrance exams. Most of these exams are used for selection and placement purposes. Table V.15 summarizes all the admission tests discussed in this section. The norm appears to be to require a secondary school diploma for admitting students, while selection is based on grades obtained in the official exam. An additional requirement is an institutional entrance exam, which is required more often than international exams. All three additional requirements occupy a marginal role in admission (between 5 percent and 9 percent)

Table V.15: All Admission Requirements

Admissions requirements	Yes	No	% Yes
Secondary school diploma	298	2	99.3
National test	27	273	9.0
International test	79	156	26.3
Institutional entrance exam	121	115	40.3
Other tests/exams	28	5	9.3
Specific conditions for acceptance	17		5.7

Dimension 4: Cultural Orientation

This is a dimension that is unique to Arab universities. Because of historical and cultural reasons, Arab universities follow different models such as the Arab, American, French, and British and sometimes a combination of these or other new ones. Included in this dimension is the language of instruction and administration.

Institutional model and orientation

HEIs were asked about the prevailing cultural model (Arab, American, French, and British) at their institution, and whether there were any other models in existence. An institution's cultural orientation is likely to depend on a number of factors, including language, curriculum organization, and historical affiliation, among others.

It is assumed that the French model is different from the American model in various aspects: language of teaching, curriculum organization (the French model may include a preparatory year, while the American one includes the freshman year; the French model—and the European one in general—relies on LMD and ECTS), institutional structure, budget planning, faculty selection, recruitment and promotion, research organization, relationship with the State, and autonomy.

In the nineteenth century, the modern model of higher institutions was imported from Europe and the USA. Institutions that were more traditional were typically those that offered Islamic studies. Even among the latter group, many of them have adopted specific attributes of the American or the French model, as a way to adapt to international settings. However, at face value, these institutions often see themselves as having an Arab orientation.

As table V.16 shows, the French model is most prevalent (45 percent of all HEIs), followed closely by the American (43 percent), while the other models were in place in few institutions: the Arab (1 percent), the British (2.7 percent), the European (1 percent), and the Canadian (1 percent). Given their low frequency, the last three were combined into the “other” category. The remaining institutions (6 percent) have in place a mixed cultural model.

Not surprisingly, certain cultural models are more likely to be prevalent in specific countries. The American one is predominant in the Gulf States and Jordan, the French model in North African countries, while HEIs in Lebanon are divided between the two models, in addition to the “mixed” model. In terms of

date of establishment, data show that the American model has witnessed some expansion during the last decade (53.9 percent), compared to the period of 1960-1998 (40.65 percent), at the expenses of the French model that was dominant during this period (55.2 percent) but has diminished somewhat in the last decade (37 percent).

Table V.16: Institutional Model by Country

Country	Institutional model										Total Responding
	Arab		American		French		Other		Mixed		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Jordan	0	.0	33	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	33
Lebanon	3	7.7	20	51.3	7	17.9	3	7.7	6	15.4	39
Morocco	0	.0	1	1.5	67	98.5	0	.0	0	.0	68
Saudi Arabia	0	.0	22	91.7	0	.0	1	4.2	1	4.2	24
Tunisia	0	.0	1	1.4	60	84.5	0	.0	10	14.1	71
Qatar	0	.0	8	66.7	0	.0	3	25.0	1	8.3	12
UAE	0	.0	43	84.3	0	.0	7	13.7	1	2.0	51
Total	3	1.0	128	43.0	134	45.0	14	4.7	19	6.4	298

There appears also to be a significant relationship between sector and cultural model. The public sector is more French (67 percent) than American (26 percent), with the opposite being true for the non-public sector—the American model is found in approximately 60 percent of all these institutions and the French in 24 percent.

Language of Administration

Contrary to expectation, Arabic alone is used for administrative purposes by less than half of all institutions (37 percent) (table V.17). An almost equal proportion of institutions rely on a combination of Arabic and a foreign language, likely English or French. Almost a quarter of all institutions rely exclusively on English, while only three percent rely solely on French.

In sum, diversity of language for administration purposes is the rule in Arab countries. However, some patterns can be observed: HEIs in the non-public sector of the Gulf region are most likely to have in place an American model and English as the language of administration. HEIs of the public sector, regardless of the institutional model, use Arabic for administration. The combination of Arabic and foreign language is more related to public than to non-public and very specific to Morocco (Arabic-French). Lebanon is a special case: it might be considered a micro-region, where several languages coexist.

Table V.17: Language of Administration by Country

Country	Language for administration								Total Responding
	Arabic		English		French		Arabic-foreign		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Jordan	27	81.8	3	9.1	0	.0	3	9.1	33
Lebanon	10	24.4	10	24.4	5	12.2	16	39.0	41
Morocco	0	.0	1	1.5	0	.0	67	98.5	68
Saudi Arabia	24	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	24
Tunisia	48	67.6	1	1.4	3	4.2	19	26.8	71
Qatar	1	8.3	9	75.0	0	.0	2	16.7	12
UAE	1	2.0	45	88.2	0	.0	5	9.8	51
Total	111	37.0	69	23.0	8	2.7	112	37.3	300

Language of instruction

The primary language for instruction varies from the primary language used for administrative purposes. While 37 percent of all institutions relied on Arabic as a language of administration, only 15 percent did so as a medium of instruction for the humanities and almost none did for the sciences. Most institutions (44 percent) provide humanities instruction in Arabic combined with another foreign language (table V.18). While it is not the most prevalent language of instruction, English has increased in popularity since the 1960s—a trend that is probably related to the growth of non-public institutions in the region and emerging systems of higher education in the Gulf States that often include institutions and faculty from overseas. In the last decade, internationalization has also led to an increase in English-language instruction, while Arabic has remained from the nationalistic era and French from the colonialist era.

Table V.18: Language of Teaching Humanities by Country

Country	Language for teaching Humanities										Total Responding
	Arabic		English		French		Arabic-foreign		Foreign		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Jordan	0	.0	2	6.1	0	.0	31	93.9	0	.0	33
Lebanon	6	18.8	8	25.0	1	3.1	13	40.6	4	12.5	32
Morocco	14	77.8	1	5.6	1	5.6	2	11.1	0	.0	18
Saudi Arabia	7	31.8	1	4.5	0	.0	14	63.6	0	.0	22
Tunisia	0	.0	2	6.3	10	31.3	18	56.3	2	6.3	32
Qatar	1	12.5	6	75.0	0	.0	1	12.5	0	.0	8
UAE	2	3.9	42	82.4	0	.0	7	13.7	0	.0	51
Total	30	15.3	62	31.6	12	6.1	86	43.9	6	3.1	196

Using all three indicators of language (administration, teaching humanities, and teaching sciences) we developed a linguistic profile of the institution. This includes three broad categories: mono-lingual, bilingual, and multilingual, with subdivisions within each. Table V.19 indicates that 24 percent of HEIs are mono-lingual, 65 percent are bilingual, and 11 percent are multilingual (three languages).

Table V.19: Language Orientation of Institution

Language		Frequency	Percent
Mono-lingual	Arabic	5	1.7
	English	60	20.0
	French	6	2.0
Bi-lingual	Arabic-French	112	37.3
	Arabic-English	80	26.7
	English-French	4	1.3
Multilingual	Arabic-English-French	33	11.0
	Total	300	100.0

Table V.20 shows the geographical distribution of the language classification of HEIs. In Qatar and the UAE, English prevails as the primary language, while French is not found to be the dominant language in any country. The bilingual situation prevails in Saudi Arabia and Jordan for English, French in Morocco and Tunisia. Lebanon is linguistically unique, with HEIs that are either bilingual or multilingual.

Table V.20: Linguistic Orientation by Country

Country	Mono-lingual						Bi-lingual						Multilingual		Total Responding
	Arabic		English		French		Arabic- French		Arabic- English		English- French		Arabic- English-French		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Jordan	0	.0	1	3.0	0	.0	0	.0	32	97.0	0	.0	0	.0	33
Lebanon	2	4.9	8	19.5	3	7.3	2	4.9	13	31.7	2	4.9	11	26.8	41
Morocco	0	.0	1	1.5	0	.0	67	98.5	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	68
Saudi Arabia	1	4.2	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	23	95.8	0	.0	0	.0	24
Tunisia	0	.0	0	.0	3	4.2	43	60.6	1	1.4	2	2.8	22	31.0	71
Qatar	1	8.3	9	75.0	0	.0	0	.0	2	16.7	0	.0	0	.0	12
UAE	1	2.0	41	80.4	0	.0	0	.0	9	17.6	0	.0	0	.0	51
Total	5	1.7	60	20.0	6	2.0	112	37.3	80	26.7	4	1.3	33	11.0	300

To conclude, it is plausible to say that HEIs in the Arab countries are culturally and linguistically dichotomous; English is expanding, sometimes at the expense of Arabic and French, and that there is diversity within countries.

Dimension 5: Regional Engagement

This dimension draws upon the European Classification of Higher Education Institutions. The European model was developed for a European region comprised of many separate countries and this dimension is relevant to the Arab region which includes independent states. Moreover, there are Arab universities in some countries that have branches in other Arab countries. Also in some universities, students and faculty members are drawn from within the region.

Data for this dimension and the subsequent section on international engagement was incomplete, with only a third of HEIs able to provide a breakdown of regional Arab students and international students. For the remaining institutions, the missing data indicates one of two things: there are either no international students, or the institution does not maintain a count of international students. This point deserves more discussion. In the Arab region, as in other interconnected regions of the world like Europe and Africa, people are often able to move across borders and within the region without any special documentation that identifies them as “foreign” or “international.” This makes it difficult then to measure student and faculty mobility. Moreover, where one Arab country might not view students from a neighboring country as “international,” this leads to a significant undercount of student exchange and mobility.

For the purposes of our study, students were divided into three categories that reflected how most institutions in the region view their student population: students who were citizens of the country; non-citizen, Arab students from within the region; and international students (i.e., non-citizens and non-Arab students) who belong to countries outside the region.

Regional (non-citizen, Arab) students

Among the 150 HEIs that were able to provide a breakdown of the origin of their students, the vast majority of those enrolled are citizen students (94 percent), non-citizen Arab students are 4.3 percent, and foreign students constitute 1.7 percent. HEIs were thus classified as having a low, moderate or high proportion of non-citizen Arab students.

There is a significant difference between sectors in terms of Arab students: almost 40 percent of non-public HEIs enroll a high proportion of Arab students from within the region as compared to public HEIs

that primarily enroll citizens of the country. At the country level, HEIs in Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia enroll few Arab students from within the region, while those in the UAE and Qatar (primarily branch campuses) are more likely to enroll Arab students from within the region (table V.21). Further, most Arab students from the region are enrolled at the undergraduate level.¹⁵

Table V.21: Categories of HEIs Enrolling Regional (Non-citizen, Arab) Students by Country

Country	Arab students						Total Responding
	Low percentage		Medium percentage		High percentage		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Jordan	4	44.4	5	55.6	0	.0	9
Lebanon	13	61.9	6	28.6	2	9.5	21
Morocco	11	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	11
Saudi Arabia	18	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	18
Tunisia	20	76.9	6	23.1	0	.0	26
Qatar	1	10.0	4	40.0	5	50.0	10
UAE	3	6.4	16	34.0	28	59.6	47
Total	70	49.3	37	26.1	35	24.6	142

Regional teaching staff or faculty

Only 190 institutions provided data on the national origin of their teaching staff. Countries with more than 85 percent of their teaching staff or faculty drawn from among their citizens include Jordan, Lebanon, and Morocco, while less than 15 percent of faculty in Qatar and the UAE are domestic. Table V.22 shows that Jordan, Lebanon and Morocco have low regional engagement in terms of faculty, while Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE have medium to high engagement. These findings suggest that Gulf countries tend to recruit faculty either from within the region or from an international pool, either because of a shortage of qualified domestic faculty or because HEIs in these countries are more “outward focused.”

Table V.22: Regional (Non-citizen, Arab) Faculty by Country

Country	Arab faculty								Total Responding
	None		Low %		Medium %		High %		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Jordan	2	7.4	12	44.4	13	48.1	0	.0	27
Lebanon	3	16.7	12	66.7	3	16.7	0	.0	18
Morocco	8	61.5	5	38.5	0	.0	0	.0	13
Saudi Arabia	1	9.1	1	9.1	4	36.4	5	45.5	11
Tunisia	4	33.3	8	66.7	0	.0	0	.0	12
Qatar	2	18.2	3	27.3	4	36.4	2	18.2	11
UAE	6	12.2	2	4.1	22	44.9	19	38.8	49
Total	26	18.4	43	30.5	46	32.6	26	18.4	141

¹⁵ More detailed analysis was carried out on the enrollment of regional Arab students by academic level. However, in the interest of space, the analysis is not presented here.

Regional collaboration: twinning programs and cooperation agreements

Detailed information on the nature of twinning programs was available from only 66 institutions that together had in place a total of 237 twinning programs (table V.23). While 56 HEIs reported twinning programs with international non-Arab institutions, only four mentioned they have twinning programs with regional ones and six reported having twinning programs with both Arab and regional institutions. It appears, overall, that there are few twinning programs within the region.

Table V.23: Twinning Programs by Country

Country	Total number of twinning/joint programs		Total Arab twinning programs	
	N	Sum	N	Sum
Jordan	4	18	2	3
Lebanon	16	78	3	3
Morocco	13	58	1	2
Saudi Arabia	7	27		
Tunisia	13	29	3	5
Qatar	3	7		
UAE	10	20		
Total	66	237	9	13

Cooperation agreements

About a third (125) of the institutions in the sample reported a total of 2,807 cooperation agreements, mostly with international partners (2,194 or 78 percent) while only 321 agreements are held with Arab region partners (11.4 percent). Institutions were further classified according to the number of agreements.

Morocco has in the place the largest number of agreements (an average of 83 agreements per institution), both in terms of the total number of agreements as well as the number of regional agreements. HEIs in Saudi Arabia and Gulf States have few to none, while those in Morocco, Tunisia, and Jordan have a moderate to high number of regional agreements with HEIs in other Arab countries (Table V.24).

Table V.24: HEIs by Level of Regional Cooperation by Country

Country	Arab cooperation agreements								Total
	None		Low %		Medium %		High %		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Jordan	2	15.4	2	15.4	4	30.8	5	38.5	13
Lebanon	13	52.0	5	20.0	4	16.0	3	12.0	25
Morocco	3	20.0	1	6.7	10	66.7	1	6.7	15
Saudi Arabia	15	75.0	1	5.0	4	20.0	0	.0	20
Tunisia	7	38.9	0	.0	8	44.4	3	16.7	18
Qatar	4	66.7	0	.0	2	33.3	0	.0	6
UAE	20	71.4	1	3.6	4	14.3	3	10.7	28
Total	64	51.2	10	8.0	36	28.8	15	12.0	125

Intended regional engagement

207 HEIs said they have a mission statement, but only 179 provided a complete description. The statements were analyzed in order to find out whether they include some regional orientation (and other orientations, such as international, local, religious). These findings are aligned with those observed for cooperative agreements and twinning, where regional engagement is very weak compared to international engagement. Only 74 institutions expressed interest in regional collaboration (41.3 percent). However, many mission statements often tend to be formal statements and might not represent actual institutional strategy and a framework for action. For example, even among the 74 institutions that include regional engagement as part of their mission, only 42 have regional faculty, 5 have Arab twinning programs, and 22 hold agreements with Arab partners.

Regional dimension index

The six indicators of regional engagement were used to classify institutions as having low, moderate or high levels of regional engagement. Table V.25 shows that HEIs in Morocco and Tunisia are less regionally engaged, while those of the UAE are more regionally engaged. HEIs in Saudi Arabia are mostly at the low or medium levels of engagement; those of Qatar and Lebanon are mostly in the medium category, while those of Jordan are divided between the low and high categories.

Table V.25: Categories of Regional Engagement by Country

Country	Regional engagement index								Total
	None or missing		Low		Medium		High		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Jordan	3	9.1	18	54.5	6	18.2	6	18.2	33
Lebanon	12	29.3	10	24.4	17	41.5	2	4.9	41
Morocco	48	70.6	11	16.2	9	13.2	0	.0	68
Saudi Arabia	2	8.3	12	50.0	10	41.7	0	.0	24
Tunisia	39	54.9	21	29.6	9	12.7	2	2.8	71
Qatar	0	.0	1	8.3	9	75.0	2	16.7	12
UAE	1	2.0	7	13.7	21	41.2	22	43.1	51
Total	105	35.0	80	26.7	81	27.0	34	11.3	300

Dimension 6: International Engagement

Based on the European Classification of Higher Education Institutions, this dimension is relevant because there are universities in the Arab countries which are branches of American and European universities. In addition, some Arab universities have international students and faculty, and also attempt to send their domestic students and faculty overseas on exchange programs. This dimension included the following 12 comprehensive indicators of internationalization: international students; incoming graduate students holding degrees from other institution; graduate students sent out in international exchange program; foreign teaching staff; international sources of income (gifts and grants); twinning with international HEIs; cooperation agreements; intended international engagement; affiliation to international institution (Identity); international admission test; accreditation; and the availability and organization of international resources on campus.

In the interest of space, this section discusses findings for a subset of the twelve indicators listed above; especially those that had better response rates. For example, few institutions were able to provide data on international exchange students on their campuses, as well as their students participating in exchange programs overseas.

International (non-Arab) Students

As mentioned earlier, out of 1.44 million, 94 percent are citizen, 4.3 percent are Arab, and 1.7 percent are foreign students. Yet the proportion of foreign students varies between 0 and 80 percent. HEIs were thus classified as having a low, medium, and high proportion of international students. At the country level, institutions in Qatar and the UAE have the largest proportion of foreign students, while Saudi Arabia and Morocco have the least (table V.26). There are significant differences in terms of sector: more institutions in the non-public are likely to host international students as compared with public institutions.

Table V.26: Categories of Foreign Students by Country

Country	Percentage of foreign students						Total
	Low		Medium		High		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Jordan	5	71.4	2	28.6	0	.0	7
Lebanon	11	61.1	7	38.9	0	.0	18
Morocco	12	92.3	1	7.7	0	.0	13
Saudi Arabia	13	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	13
Tunisia	14	58.3	7	29.2	3	12.5	24
Qatar	1	10.0	6	60.0	3	30.0	10
UAE	11	22.4	26	53.1	12	24.5	49
Total	67	50.0	49	36.6	18	13.4	134

The breakdown of foreign students by degree (undergraduate/graduate) is available for 118 HEIs that enroll a total of 18,051 foreign undergraduate students and 4,407 foreign graduate students (table v.27).

Table V.27: Foreign Students in Undergraduate and Graduate Degrees by Country

Country	N	% foreign students	
		Undergraduate	Graduate
Jordan	7	87.3	12.7
Lebanon	18	78.6	10.4
Morocco	10	74.1	25.9
Saudi Arabia	12	38.7	11.3
Tunisia	14	72.3	27.7
Qatar	8	70.9	16.6
UAE	49	67.7	15.9
Total	118	68.9	16.7

International teaching and research staff

Only 145 out of 300 HEIs (48 percent) were able to provide data on the nationality of their teaching staff. Among these institutions, only 11 percent of the teaching staff is from non-Arab countries, while 13 percent are from neighboring Arab countries. Despite the low presence of foreign faculty, there are a handful of campuses in which the entire faculty is foreign, including one in Lebanon (Ecole Supérieure des Affaires), one in Qatar (College of the North Atlantic - Qatar), and five in the UAE (American University of Ras Al Khaimah, American College of Dubai, Institute of Management and Technology-Dubai, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Dubai, University of Strathclyde Business School).

There are differences by sector, with private institutions recruiting more foreign faculty than public institutions. A similar significant difference is found in terms of countries (table V.28). HEIs in Qatar and the UAE recruit more foreign faculty, while the other pilot countries have a low presence of foreign faculty (with the exception of Lebanon). The large presence of foreign faculty in the Gulf States is not surprising, given that these countries are home to foreign branch campuses that have foreign teaching staff. Other institutions in the region, such as NYU-Abu Dhabi and the King Abdullah University for Science and Technology (KAUST), have made concerted efforts to hire world-class faculty from around the globe.

Table V.28: Presence of Foreign Faculty in HEIs, by Country

Country	% foreign faculty								Total
	None		Low %		Medium %		High %		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Jordan	10	38.5	12	46.2	4	15.4	0	.0	26
Lebanon	3	14.3	7	33.3	10	47.6	1	4.8	21
Morocco	9	64.3	4	28.6	1	7.1	0	.0	14
Saudi Arabia	2	20.0	5	50.0	3	30.0	0	.0	10
Tunisia	1	7.1	12	85.7	1	7.1	0	.0	14
Qatar	1	9.1	0	.0	3	27.3	7	63.6	11
UAE	2	4.1	0	.0	26	53.1	21	42.9	49
Total	28	19.3	40	27.6	48	33.1	29	20.0	145

When compared with students, there appears to be a higher proportion of faculty drawn from the region and from countries outside the region. That being said, there appears to be a correlation between these two indicators: for the most part, countries with a higher proportion of foreign teaching staff are also the ones with larger populations of foreign students.

International collaboration: Twinning and cooperation agreements

Twining

Among the 66 institutions that reported twinning programs, 95 percent reported having such arrangements in place with international partners, which leads us to conclude that when a twinning program is in place, it is typically international in nature. This is an interesting finding, given the overall low levels of international engagement on the other indicators within this dimension. Looking at the trends by country, table V.29 shows that all HEIs in Qatar and the UAE have only international twinning programs.

Table V.29: Level of International Twinning by Country

Country	No international twinning		Twinning moderately internationally oriented		Twinning completely internationally oriented		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Jordan	1	25.0	1	25.0	2	50.0	4
Lebanon	0	.0	3	18.8	13	81.2	16
Morocco	1	7.7	0	.0	12	92.3	13
Saudi Arabia	0	.0	1	14.3	6	85.7	7
Tunisia	2	15.4	1	7.7	10	76.9	13
Qatar	0	.0	0	.0	3	100.0	3
UAE	0	.0	0	.0	10	100.0	10
Total	4	6.1	6	9.1	56	84.8	66

Cooperation agreements

Out of the 2,288 agreements reported by 115 HEIs, 287 are with local partners, 289 are with Arab regional partners, and 1,712 are with international partners. Across countries, the largest number of international agreements is observed in Lebanon (182), followed by Morocco (152), while a smaller number exists in Qatar (6). Overall, a large proportion of HEIs (40 percent) in the seven countries have cooperation agreements in place that are exclusively international; while 27 percent have a low level of engagement in international cooperation agreements (table V.30).

Table V.30: Level of HEIs Engagement in International Agreements by Country

Country	No international agreements		Low % international agreements		Medium % international agreements		Agreements completely internationally oriented		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Jordan	2	15.4	8	61.5	1	7.7	2	15.4	13
Lebanon	1	4.0	6	24.0	9	36.0	9	36.0	25
Morocco	1	6.7	2	13.3	9	60.0	3	20.0	15
Saudi Arabia	1	5.0	4	20.0	3	15.0	12	60.0	20
Tunisia	0	.0	5	27.8	6	33.3	7	38.9	18
Qatar	1	16.7	2	33.3	0	.0	3	50.0	6
UAE	3	10.7	7	25.0	4	14.3	14	50.0	28
Total	9	7.2	34	27.2	32	25.6	50	40.0	125

Institutional- and program-level Accreditation

The majority of HEIs in the seven countries are accredited locally (82.3 percent), 9 percent have an international institutional accreditation, and 8 percent reported that their accreditation is “in process.”

Institutions reported receiving international accreditation from various accrediting agencies, involving a mix of programmatic and institutional accrediting agencies, and sometimes universities or organizations

which typically do not perform an accrediting function. After validating the information, we arrived at the following list of 10 accrediting agencies that appeared to be in use by HEIs in the region.

Accrediting agency
American Academy for Liberal Education, USA
Association des Universites Europeennes (EUA)
British Accrediting Agency (OUVS)
Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association, USA
Middle States Commission on Higher Education, USA
New England Association of Schools and Colleges, USA
New York State Board of Education, USA
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, USA
TAFE NSW, Australia

The 24 HEIs which said they obtained institutional accreditation received it in just the past decade, suggesting that there is a growing awareness about being recognized internationally. There also appeared to be some confusion amongst institutions as to what is meant by accreditation. If we merge those HEIs which claimed they obtained accreditation with those that claimed they are in process, we obtain the following distribution by country.

Table V.31: International Accreditation Status of HEIs by Country

Country	No international institutional accreditation		International institution accreditation		Total
	N	%	N	%	N
Jordan	31	100.0	0	.0	31
Lebanon	33	80.5	8	19.5	41
Morocco	66	98.5	1	1.5	67
Saudi Arabia	8	36.4	14	63.6	22
Tunisia	39	84.8	7	15.2	46
Qatar	3	37.5	5	62.5	8
UAE	34	66.7	17	33.3	51
Total	214	80.5	52	19.5	266

Programmatic accreditation

46 HEIs (17.6 percent of the 216 that answered the question) said they have obtained or are in the processing of obtaining programmatic international accreditation. Although programmatic accreditation appears to be fairly low among institutions across the seven countries, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE are the most involved in this kind of accreditation; Jordan is the less involved (table V.32).

Table V.32: Categories of HEIs Internationally Accredited Programs by Country

Country	Number of internationally accredited programs								Total
	None		One program		2-6 programs		7-13 programs		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Jordan	29	96.7	0	.0	0	.0	1	3.3	30
Lebanon	32	78.0	5	12.2	4	9.8	0	.0	41
Morocco	62	92.5	3	4.5	2	3.0	0	.0	67
Saudi Arabia	10	50.0	8	40.0	1	5.0	1	5.0	20
Tunisia	30	85.7	4	11.4	1	2.9	0	.0	35
Qatar	4	44.4	2	22.2	2	22.2	1	11.1	9
UAE	33	64.7	10	19.6	5	9.8	3	5.9	51
Total	200	79.1	32	12.6	15	5.9	6	2.4	253

The international accrediting agencies of programs cited in the questionnaires and the number of programs accredited are shown below in table V.33. Among the 82 HEIs that received program accreditation, each agency accredited between 1 and 13 programs at each institution. Overall, most of the agencies providing accreditation were from the United States; the agency most involved in program accreditation is ABET¹⁶. As the table below indicates, 10 institutions had one program each accredited by ABET, while two institutions had two accredited programs each, and one institution had a total of eight program accredited by ABET.

Table V.33: Number of HEIs by Accrediting Agency and by Number of Accredited Programs

Number of accredited programs	Number of HEIs by accrediting agency/country									
	ABET	AACSB	NCATE	Other US	UK	Canada	Australia	Other countries	UN	Total
1	10	6	1	15	5	3	3	14	3	60
2	2			3		3		2		10
3				1	3				1	5
4				1	1			1		3
5						1				1
7							1			1
8	1									1
13								1		1
Total	13	6	1	20	9	7	4	18	4	82

Index of international engagement

The index of international engagement for each HEI is based on the sum of values of all 15 indicators and sub-indicators that make up the dimension. HEIs were classified into four categories whose distribution by country is shown in table V.34. Overall, only 19 percent of institutions had a high level of international engagement, while most institutions (42 percent) had either low levels of international engagement or no demonstrable international engagement. Among the seven countries in the pilot, institutions in Qatar, UAE, and Lebanon were more likely to engage internationally with institutions in non-Arab countries. On the other hand, most institutions in Morocco and Tunisia had low levels of engagement with non-Arab countries.

¹⁶ Formerly known as the *Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology* (ABET), and since 2005 known as ABET Inc.

Table V.34: Institutions' Levels of International Engagement by Country

Country	No IE or low IE		Medium IE		High IE		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Jordan	13	39.4	20	60.6	0	.0	33
Lebanon	15	36.6	13	31.7	13	31.7	41
Morocco	48	70.6	16	23.5	4	5.9	68
Saudi Arabia	3	12.5	14	58.3	7	29.2	24
Tunisia	47	66.2	23	32.4	1	1.4	71
Qatar	0	.0	3	25.0	9	75.0	12
UAE	1	2.0	26	51.0	24	47.1	51
Total	127	42.3	115	38.3	58	19.3	300

V. CONCLUSION

The current study and its findings are a critical first step in gathering institutional data for the higher education sector in the Arab world that attempts to provide a common standard across countries in the region. Our findings help fill a gap that has been identified by groups ranging from the ANQAHE within the region, to multilateral agencies like the World Bank. In this concluding section of the report we summarize key findings, share challenges inherent in conducting a complex study of this nature, and offer recommendations for expanding the work carried out in our pilot study. Variations by the sector of the institution (public vs. non-public), and by country or sub-region (Gulf nations as compared with North African countries) are highlighted where relevant.

Paucity of institutional-level data on higher education

There was a lack of data on certain key education indicators across all seven countries in our sample. The missing data was due to one or more of the following reasons: the data in question had either never been collected; had not been organized in a form that could be reported; or institutions were reluctant to provide certain types of information such as details of the institution's funding model. This lack of data was most apparent in the following dimensions in our classification model: research involvement; the teaching and learning profile; the faculty profile; and the financial profile of the institution. Recent research by the World Bank in the region has also noted the lack of data on similar indicators such as the qualifications and accomplishments of teaching staff; indicators of research excellence such as memberships in prestigious academies and societies; and awards received by faculty.

At the student level, there is a shortage of disaggregated data by academic level, and more complete data is needed on student enrollment and graduation rates. Another key indicator for which there was substantial missing data is the international mobility of staff and students, two areas of interest that have also been flagged by the World Bank. For most institutions in our study, the missing mobility data indicates one of two things: there are either no international students and/or teaching staff, or the institution has not measured this type of mobility and academic exchange. As discussed elsewhere in this report, the absence of this data can result in a significant undercount of student and faculty exchange and mobility for the region at large.

A profile of students in the pilot study

Across all seven countries on which data was collected, students were primarily studying at the undergraduate level. In general, there is gender equity in student enrollment, as reported, and co-education is common. However, co-education is interpreted in varying ways: in some countries it simply means that men and women attend the same campus but are segregated in classrooms, while in others it

means that the two sexes mingle freely. Citizens make up close to 90 percent of the student body, with the remaining students coming from neighboring Arab countries and other parts of the world. There are some key differences by country, however. The Gulf countries in our study, Qatar and UAE in particular, drew more international students than the other Arab countries.

Shifting cultural models

Given the cultural and political history of the region, most institutions are aligned with a foreign model of education. An institution's cultural orientation is likely to depend on a number of factors, including language, curriculum organization, and historical affiliation, among others. The French model is most prevalent (45 percent of all HEIs), followed by the American (43 percent), while the other models were in place in just a few institutions. About 6 percent of all institutions have in place a mixed cultural model.

Not surprisingly, certain cultural models are more likely to be prevalent in specific countries. The American one prevails in the Gulf States and Jordan, the French model in North African countries, while HEIs in Lebanon are influenced by more than one cultural model. However, the cultural model of HEIs in the region has evolved over time: the American model has witnessed rapid expansion during the last decade, surpassing the French model which was predominant from 1960-1998. The influence of the American model is seen in academic characteristics such as the structure of courses and the adoption of the semester system. The American influence is also seen most in the Gulf region probably because Qatar and the UAE are already home to the branch campuses of several American institutions.

It remains to be seen what impact the recent events in the region will have on the cultural model of institutions, but it is likely that the "Arab spring" will certainly affect the governance system of higher education, probably in the direction of more independence, participation and partnership—features that are often found in the American model of higher education. But in terms of language, it might be the case that Arabic witnesses resurgence.

Regional and International engagement

Overall, Arab institutions' involvement at the international level is relatively low. Very few institutions are engaged in various forms of international collaboration such as twinning. Student mobility among Arab countries is also weak, with non-public institutions more likely to host international students than public institutions. Few if any institutions have offices in other countries, and even fewer have on-campus offices of international affairs and offices for visiting students and scholars. Yet there is a critical need for institutions of the region to engage with those outside, especially as they rebuild their societies after the recent political events and begin to engage a newly mobilized youth population. At the recently concluded 2011 annual conference of the European Association for International Education (EAIE), academics, ministers and policymakers from Arab countries emphasized that partnerships between European and "Arab Spring" universities "will be vital to improving higher education in the fledgling democracies...in a period of transition."¹⁷

There are some indications, however, that countries within the region are recognizing the need to be more "outward" oriented. This is apparent, for example, in the languages that institutions use for administration and teaching. Contrary to expectation, Arabic alone is used for administrative purposes by less than half of all institutions. An almost equal proportion of institutions rely on a combination of Arabic and a foreign language, likely English or French. And almost a quarter of all institutions rely solely on English as the language of administration. The typical HEI is dichotomous, using two different languages: one for administration and/or teaching humanities and one for teaching hard sciences. While it is not the most prevalent language of instruction, English has increased in popularity since the 1960s—a trend that is probably related to the growth of non-public institutions in the region and emerging systems of higher education in the Gulf States that often include institutions and faculty from overseas.

¹⁷ http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2011/09/22/conference_on_europe_and_the_arab_spring

Despite the overall low levels of higher education internationalization seen in the region, there are notable differences by country and sub-region. The Gulf countries are leading the region in several areas of international engagement. In our study, institutions in both Qatar and UAE had significant proportions of international faculty and students not just from within the Arab region, but also from non-Arab countries. The large presence of foreign faculty in the Gulf States is not surprising, given that these countries are home to foreign branch campuses that have foreign teaching staff. Other demographic factors might also play a role: to begin with, the Gulf States have a larger foreign-born population, including corporate expatriates. Other institutions in the region, such as NYU-Abu Dhabi and the King Abdullah University for Science and Technology (KAUST), have made concerted efforts to hire world-class faculty from around the globe. Not surprisingly, countries with a higher proportion of foreign teaching staff are also the ones with larger populations of foreign students, suggesting openness at the institution-level to engage globally. All of this being said, the motivations for drawing upon an international talent pool are varied: some countries in the region might need to recruit overseas faculty because of a shortage of qualified domestic faculty, while for HEIs in the other countries the recruitment efforts might be part of a carefully articulated strategy to make their institutions world-class, as is the case with Qatar.

Impact of branch campuses on the region

The rapid growth of branch campuses in the region, such as those in Qatar and the UAE, is having an impact on the higher education landscape of the region. Our study points to some interesting trends that are beginning to emerge, some of which have been discussed above, such as the presence of international faculty and students. It should be said that some of these developments or “innovations” are also correlated with the fact that many institutions in the Gulf countries are private institutions. For example, there is increasing use of international admission exams in the Gulf countries, perhaps because these countries have a large number of private institutions, many of which also happen to be international/branch campuses.

Research support

It is widely acknowledged in the literature and within academic rankings and classifications that the investments an institution makes in fostering research and its research productivity are critical components of academic excellence and competitiveness. To begin with, a large number of institutions in our study were not able to provide detailed data on the types of research facilities and support available. Among those for whom data was available, it appears that overall there is weak institutional investment and engagement in research. There are few research facilities and most institutions provide limited access to print books, e-books, print journals, e-journals and online databases. Although research activities are taken into consideration in the promotion of faculty members and account for a third of all criteria for making promotion decisions, teaching is given more weight than research and very few staff are active in research. According to one analysis, “In the world’s leading research universities typically some two-thirds of academic staff would be research active, including one third whose research would be internationally reputable.”¹⁸ This ratio was not evident in any of the responding countries in the current survey.

Challenges in Carrying out the Study

Although the early phases of data collection proceeded as planned, one of the major hurdles that the research team encountered in carrying out the current study was the reluctance of ministries of education and institutions to participate in an endeavor that would result in a reliable and valid classification system for the region. This was due to a combination of reasons. Many institutions reported that they had never been asked before to provide such data and were not able to do so now. Ministries of education and HEIs

¹⁸ OECD and the World Bank (2010). *Reviews of National Policies for Higher Education: Higher Education in Egypt*. Paris, France: OECD.

in the selected countries were slow and/or reluctant to respond because they were distrustful of an initiative that attempted to in any way classify, assess or rank their institutions; this was especially true for institutions which are strongly linked to central authorities. Even though the study team emphasized the value of the study for the institution/country itself and for raising the quality of higher education in the region, there appears to be widespread concern that the data will be used to expose or critique institutions in the Middle East by trying to compare them with higher quality institutions elsewhere, especially in the U.S. In light of these issues, it is likely that the missing data in the study is for one of two reasons: a lack of transparency on the part of the institution, or the actual unavailability of data on institutional characteristics.

Given the vast diversity of institutions across the seven pilot countries, it was a challenge to construct a classification that would apply to all HEIs in the region. This variation was most apparent in the types of institutions (university, university college, higher institute, business school, higher institute, academy, and community college) and sectors (public, private-nonprofit, private-for profit, and mixed). Some non-public HEIs are even identified as “governmental” and “semi-governmental” or “federal.” Non-public institutions are owned by associations (religious and non-religious), by partnership projects, by economic bodies (central bank, chamber of commerce), or by a diversity of groups. For-profit institutions are mainly established by the private sector, although there are some that are established by governments. In terms of identity, the majority are national institutions, while the others are either regional, foreign or branch of foreign universities, or co-projects.

Other variations have to do with academic requirements as well as the predominant higher education model in place in different institutions. For example, some HEIs use international tests for admission criteria, while others do not. Some use institutional entrance exams for admission purposes, others not. Some HEIs continue to function on an annual calendar of study for the Arts and Sciences, though most have adopted the semester system. However, semesters in Arab institutions do not imply the course credit system. A hybrid situation exists in which HEIs may adopt some combination of the American credit system or the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).

A final methodological challenge that we faced was that many of the faculties and departments of an institution are widely dispersed and function almost as independent campuses. As a result, institutional data is not centralized. It fell to the researchers to collate and synthesize data, which presents the challenge of ensuring that the information compiled is representative of an institution as a whole.

Last and perhaps most significant, the progress of the study was affected by the political turmoil that swept through the region and involved almost all countries in the pilot. Not only did this cause a delay in gathering data, but it also resulted in not being able to collect any data from Egypt, a key regional player in higher education.

Recommendations for the Future

Higher education in the MENA region is undergoing a period of rapid change and expansion. Our study and the resulting classification provide the groundwork for further research on developing a common framework that enables a better understanding of the institutions in the region.

The data gathered through our pilot study can be used to conduct in-depth country-level analysis. The data can also be used to further study differences across sub-regions within the larger Arab region. The CMAC assumes certain commonalities and similarities (while accounting of key differences by sector and other criteria), however there is scope to further analyze any sub-regional trends that exist. The data can also be used by HEIs to benchmark themselves within the country and the region.

Finally, although rankings were not the goal of our study, it is conceivable that data from the study can be used to generate rankings of HEIs in the seven pilot countries, especially on the dimensions for which

there is more complete and reliable data. This next step would require relative weighting of various indicators, a task that we did not undertake in our analysis as our goal was to present the data in a descriptive way rather than to rank institutions.

In conclusion, it is clear that to develop a comprehensive classification—with more complete information and that could be scaled up to apply to all countries in the region—more time and effort is needed to mobilize countries, ministers, and institutions in the MENA region regarding the importance of gathering high-quality institutional data and of participating in the classifications initiative. Local and regional buy-in is essential or else there is little motivation for governments and institutions to participate and the initiative is viewed as being externally imposed.

One step to mobilize the higher education sector in the region is to share findings from this pilot study at key events in the region with the goal of engaging representatives of the Arab countries that have participated fully in the study as well as representatives of other developing and non-Western countries that have invested in developing classification systems for their higher education sector. One example of this was a highly successful workshop at the recent 2011 WISE conference in Doha, Qatar. The session was attended by over 60 participants from several different countries. There are many good examples from Latin America, Asia, and the former Soviet states of how to develop a shared set of criteria against which to benchmark or compare HEIs, and of how to use this type of institutional data for improving the quality of higher education. Ministers of higher education from the target MENA countries can learn firsthand through the best practices of these other countries that transparency of higher education systems is critical to increasing the quality of higher education in the region, similar to what China set out to do through the Shanghai rankings (now called the Academic Ranking of World Universities or ARWU) which were originally conceived of as a way to improve the quality of Chinese institutions and to position them as world-class.

A current report on higher education in the Arab world would be incomplete without acknowledging the widespread political upheaval in the region and the potential impact of the “Arab Spring” on universities of the region as they reshape themselves to educate a newly mobilized youth population whose understanding of their political, economic, and social reality has changed dramatically. What role universities will play in preparing future leaders and the workforce of tomorrow in the region remains to be seen, but it heightens the need, at the most fundamental level, for solid institutional data and information.

The project directors gratefully acknowledge the assistance of participating HEIs and ministries in the MENA region, as well as individual research coordinators in each country, and the overarching support of Carnegie Corporation, without which the project would not have been possible.

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