



EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN LIBYA

A project UNIGOV report



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EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN LIBYA



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UNIGOV project meeting in Tunis, 30/04-1/05



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report features the main outcomes of the exploratory research study on the future of the Higher Education System (HES) in Libya. This exercise has been developed within the framework of UNIGOV (Modernizing UNIversity GOVERNance and Management in Libya), a three-year project (extended for one year) co-funded by the European Commission's Tempus programme.

The main objectives of this research study are the following:

- Identifying and evaluating current and future challenges for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Libya.
- Establishing priorities and recommendations for ensuring the sustainable development of HEIs in Libya.

For that purpose, the study was developed using Delphi and Focus Group, two different methods that were combined in order to maximize all the outputs obtained from the panel of national experts participating during the whole process.

The results are structured in three main sections:

1.1. CONTEXT ANALYSIS:

- Main external factors influencing the development of HES in Libya were identified and analysed using SLEPT approach (Society, Legislation, Economy, Politics and Technology).

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Results show Security and Politics are the key issues for the development of HES in Libya. Direct consequences of the current conflict are the destruction of key infrastructures at the universities and the important decrease in class attendance, derived from increasing levels of insecurity and the high rates of displaced people. In addition, the conflict has favoured instability at a political level, making it impossible to develop long term strategic planning for the development of HES.
- Other important factors to be considered as relevant are the basic technologies and expertise, economic dependence on oil and dollar, the outdated legal framework for HE, and the lack of connections between HES and the needs of Libyan society (private and public sector and civil society).

1.2. INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS:

- This section focuses on institutional challenges, including questions about main current and future challenges that Libyan universities need to face in order to achieve a sustainable development.
- Results show that there is a strong interest in developing research activities in Libyan universities. This development should be based in the establishment of research priorities and specialization strategies, and the promotion of masters and doctorate programs and research careers for both students and teachers.
- On the other hand, the biggest priority for the development of teaching activities is focusing on continuous professional development for teachers. Experts also mentioned as important priorities updating teaching materials and curricula and focusing on students' needs and expectations.
- For enabling technology transfer initiatives in Libyan universities, the most relevant priorities considered by the experts would be

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

orienting university activity for covering societal needs, building strong and sustainable cooperation frameworks and promoting the specialization of human resources in knowledge transfer activities.

- Finally, management of the universities -both at top level and medium level- has been considered as the most important area for improvement. Quality Assurance and Infrastructures have also been considered as very relevant areas for improvement.

1.3. IMPACT ANALYSIS:

- The last section focuses on the contribution of Libyan universities to the socio-economic development at local, regional and national level.
- The results show the experts' agreement on the role of Libyan universities as promoters of social mobility as the main contribution to the socio-economic development and there is also a high consensus on the role of universities as engines of economic growth. The role of Libyan universities as promoters of democratization is considered as the least relevant in the current context.
- Results also include a set of priorities and recommendations for developing the role of Libyan universities as engines of economic growth, as promoters of democratization, as engines of social cohesion, as engines of innovation and as promoters of social mobility.
- The consortium strongly believe that the proposed analysis will be of great help for future governmental and non- governmental initiatives aiming to improve the situation of the HE in Libya.



Discussion about “The Higher Education in Libya” in MU 16/05



2. INTRODUCTION

Libyan HEIs and research activities were once supported by the Government. However, they are now exposed to a new and free-market economy after the civil war and dramatic political reform. Increasing concerns have been raised regarding financing and governance of HEIs in the country and in fact, they are some of the main challenges in the education system.

In a report published by EACEA in 2012, major challenges for HE in Libya were identified as follows:

- Meeting the increased demands for quality improvement in HE.
- Raising the quality of HE graduates and their abilities to take personal career initiatives.
- Accreditation and quality assurance of HE institutions and programmes.
- Financing and governance of HE institutions.
- Increasing the use of IT in HE institutions.
- Strengthening scientific research in HEIs.

However, due to the on-going conflict taking place in Libya, the socio-economic and political situation of the country has dramatically changed during the last four years. The development of the HES has been affected by many internal and external factors that need to be measured before starting strategic planning initiatives to ensure the

2. INTRODUCTION

sustainability of the Libyan HES. Thus, the objectives of the study presented here are as follows:

- Identifying and evaluating current and future challenges for HE in Libya.
- Establishing priorities and proposing lines of actions to face those challenges.

Apart from the previous EACEA initiative mentioned above, other national initiatives related with the strategic planning of HE have been taking into account in order to establish the framework and the specific topics to be analysed in this study.

The core group of institutions involved in the development of this study is composed by all UNIGOV partnership, working under the coordination of the University of Alicante (Spain).



Internal workshop at the University of Zawia 25/05



3. METHODOLOGY

This study was conceived as an exploratory research study to identify and evaluate the main challenges for the HES in Libya. Thus, the main aim was to collect and analyse national experts' estimates on this topic. For that purpose the Delphi and Focus Group methods were combined in order to maximize the outputs obtained from the panel of experts participating in this research.

3.1. DELPHI METHOD

Delphi has been conceived as a research method for structuring a group communication process so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals (experts), as a whole, to deal with a complex problem.

This method helps experts to reach consensus on estimates, structuring the data collection in consecutive rounds of responses. In this case, we developed the Delphi process in 2 rounds:

- Round 1 was focused on identifying and evaluating current and future challenges for HEIs in Libya.
- Round 2 was focused on reaching consensus and establishing priorities among the results and recommendations identified during the first round.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1.1. Questionnaire Design

The design of the Delphi questionnaires (see annex a) was based on three main premises:

- Questions should incorporate the key topics identified in EACEA (2012) and other relevant references mentioned in the Introduction of this report.
- Since this is an exploratory research study, the selected topics should remain as wide as possible.
- The questionnaire had to be brief and simple to facilitate the work of experts who were working online responding to a self-administered questionnaire.

The questionnaires for the 2 Delphi rounds were structured in three main sections:

- Context Analysis: focused on external factors' analysis and including general questions, using SLEPT Analysis (Society, Legislation, Economy, Politics and Technology), about how these factors could affect the development of HES in Libya.
- Institutional Analysis: focused on institutional challenges and including questions about main current and future challenges that Libyan universities need to face in order to achieve a sustainable development.
- Impact Analysis: focused on how Libyan universities are contributing to the socio-economic development at local, regional and national levels.

3. METHODOLOGY

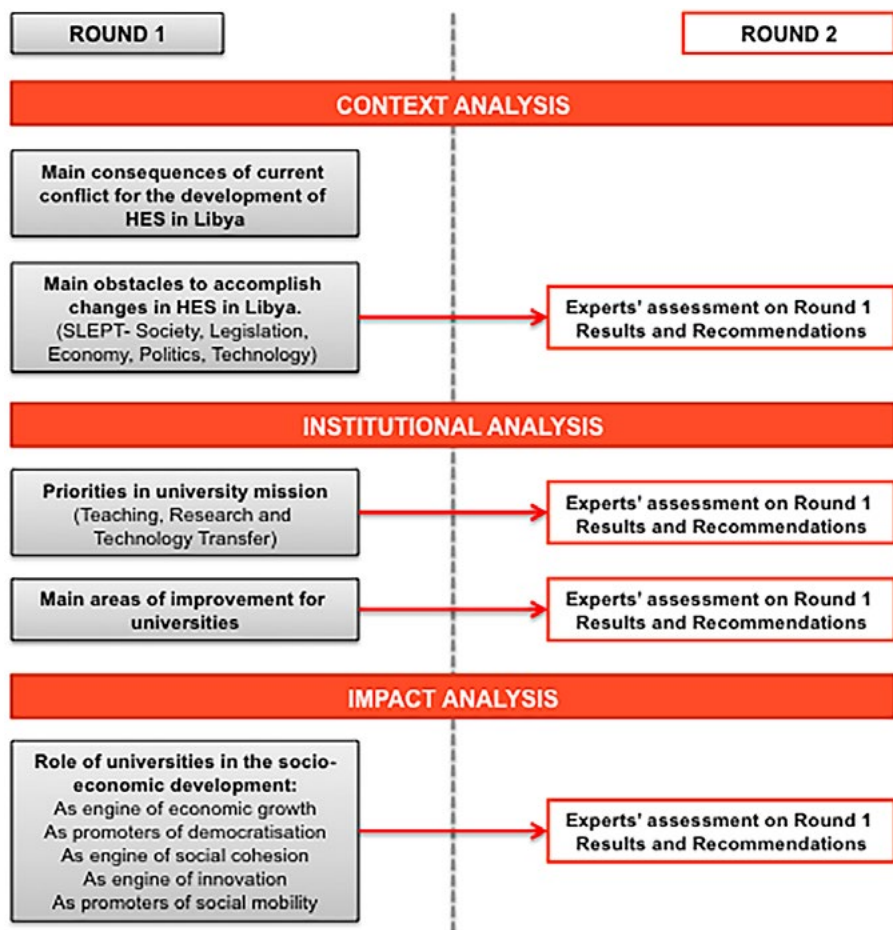


Figure 1. Delphi structure

The questionnaire for the first round had a more qualitative approach since, as previously explained, this round was devoted to the identification of challenges. However, quantitative questions –using Likert Scales– were also included in order to measure experts' opinion about different aspects of the HES in Libya.

3. METHODOLOGY

The second round questionnaire -more devoted to reaching consensus about the challenges identified during the first round- was designed with a more quantitative approach. Additionally, some qualitative questions were included in order to give the experts the chance to propose some recommendations on how to face the identified challenges.

Once designed, the questionnaire was tested by a sample of UNIGOV partners to check the validity of the proposed methodology. The verified questionnaire was translated into Arabic and administered using an online survey tool hosted by Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com).

Regarding the time frame for conducting and completing the study, the design of the Delphi study was carried until May 2016 and data collection process started in June 2016 with the launch of the first round and ended in July 2016, with the closing of the second round.

3.1.2. Experts' panel

A total of 76 experts participated in the Delphi process, representing different key institutions and bodies within the HES in Libya (see annex b). It should be highlighted here that presidents, vice-presidents, deans, vice-deans, unit directors, managers, lecturers, researchers and students from different universities in Libya, as well as public institution representatives, composed the experts' panel.

Coordinators from each of the UNIGOV partners selected and contacted the individuals participating in the Delphi process. The selected experts received a formal letter of invitation to join the Delphi process, and they were fully informed of the research objectives, the selection criteria and the preservation of their anonymity together with the procedure of the Delphi method in different rounds with different aims and types of questions. The aim was to inform the experts in advance about the research progression and estimated time required as well as

3. METHODOLOGY

to encourage participation emphasising their relevance to achieve the aims.

3.2. FOCUS GROUP

In order to evaluate and complement the preliminary results coming from the Delphi study a Focus Group session was held on July 26th, 2016. In this session, a total of 21 representatives from all UNIGOV partner institutions discussed the preliminary Delphi results. Participants were organized in three different groups of 7 persons (6 participants and 1 facilitator per group), and each group focused on one of three sections mentioned before:

- Context Analysis.
- Institutional Challenges for Universities.
- Universities' Contribution to Socio-economic Development.

The structure of the Focus Group was the following:

- Presentation of the preliminary Delphi results (on plenary session).
- Focus Group: group discussions on the topic assigned to each group.
- Plenary presentation: each group presented the results obtained in each of the group discussions.

3. METHODOLOGY

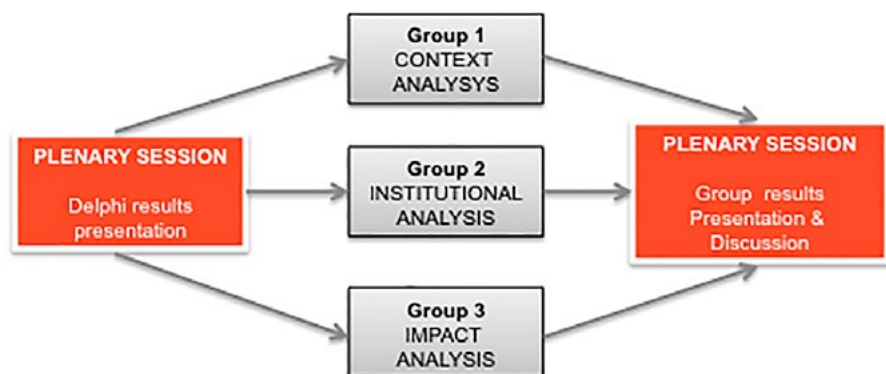


Figure 2. Focus Group Structure

The Focus Group methodology was selected because it acted as a perfect complement to the Delphi method, allowing UNIGOV partners to complement the outputs generated through the implementation of the Delphi process.



UNIGOV project meeting in Monastir 28-29/05



4. RESULTS

This section summarises the results obtained in both Delphi rounds and the Focus Group session, and are presented here following the three sections in which the questionnaires were structured:

4.1. Context Analysis.

4.2. Institutional Challenges for Universities.

4.3. Universities' Contribution to Socio-economic Development.

4.1. CONTEXT ANALYSIS

The first part of the Delphi questionnaire was devoted to collecting the experts' views on external factors affecting the development of the HES in Libya. Thus, the main aim during the first round was to identify and measure the impact of those factors.

Before beginning the general context for HES in Libya analysis, experts were asked about the consequences of the current conflict in Libya. A large majority of the experts agreed that it has had a strong negative impact on the development of the HES (see figure 3). Only 3 experts considered the conflict to have had a small impact on the HES (marking 4 or less in this question), a vision that could be related to the fact that, depending on their geographical location, experts' views showed an important gap in the perception about the conflict.

4. RESULTS

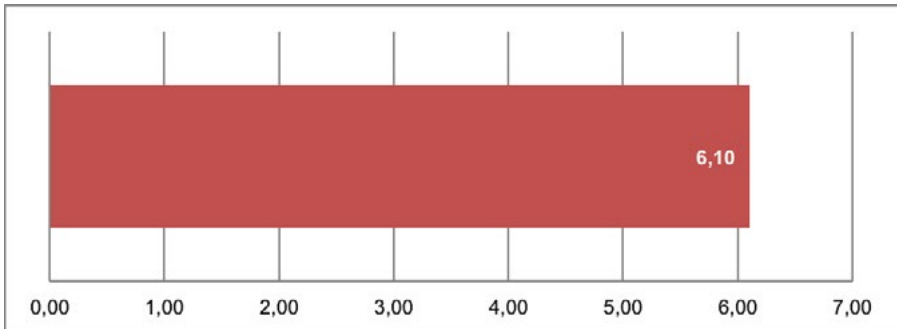


Figure 3. Has the current conflict negatively affected the development of the Higher Education System in Libya? Scale from 0 (no contribution) to 7 (a lot of contribution).

Figure represents the mean value from the total sample.

Source: own elaboration.

Among all the negative consequences of the conflict mentioned by the experts, those most mentioned are the following:

- Destruction of Infrastructures and Insecurity: In experts' opinion, the destruction of key infrastructures in Libyan universities (class-rooms, laboratories and technical equipment) and the rise of insecurity levels in some regions are the most negative direct consequences of the conflict. In their view, these two consequences make class attendance and daily management work in Libyan campuses very difficult and dangerous.
- Government Instability: At a government level, the conflict has produced an important breakup between East and West, favouring an increasing climate of instability that makes the normal functioning of HES very difficult.
- Isolation at international level: The climate of insecurity, the destruction of key infrastructures (particularly in technology and logistics) and the international embargo makes it very difficult to access some of the basic resources (both human and material) required for developing teaching and research activities within the universities.

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- Decrease in class attendance: experts' considered that the general climate of insecurity, together with the high rates of displaced people and the current priorities of the Libyan citizens, are favouring a drastic reduction on the level of attendance to universities, both in students and teachers.

In this first block, experts were also asked about other factors influencing the development of the HES. Using SLEPT (Society, Legislation, Economy, Politics and Technology) analysis, experts were asked about the main obstacles to accomplish changes in the HES in Libya, on a scale from 0 (no contribution) to 7 (a lot of contribution). Results –represented in mean value- show that Political factors are considered as the most influencing for the development of the HES (see figure 4), but giving also strong weight to Technology and Economy.

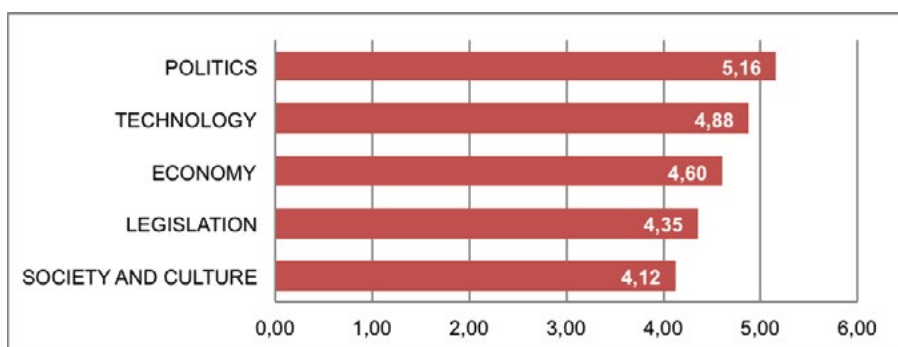


Figure 4. Which are the main obstacles to accomplishing changes in the HES in Libya? Scale from 0 (no contribution) to 7 (a lot of contribution). Figure represents the mean value from the total sample.

Source: own elaboration.

During the second Delphi round, results from the first round were presented to the experts and a big majority (78,1 %) agreed with the resulting ranking of factors. The main concern among the experts that didn't agree with this ranking was regarding the strong weight given to

4. RESULTS

Technology factors. On the other hand, Society and Culture was considered as the least relevant dimension; however, concrete factors such as regionalism and tribalism were mentioned by some of the experts as key issues for the development of the HES.

Additionally, experts were also asked which concrete factors are the most influencing in each dimension. The factors identified by the experts were also evaluated during the Focus Group session, complementing experts' views with some additional comments.

4.1.1. Politics

- Government instability: a majority of the experts were highly concerned about this issue, since it doesn't allow the establishment of medium and long term HE strategies.
- State Control: High level of state control has become an important barrier that makes it very difficult to ensure independence and reinforce governance in HEIs in Libya.
- Lack of planning: experts also considered as an important barrier for the development of the HES the remarkable lack of medium and long term planning.

Participants in the Focus Group also considered that the general politic context -at national level- is not favourable for the development of a sustainable strategy for the HES. However, they considered there is a big opportunity for working with local governments, trying to reach their support for both developing local initiatives and lobbying in favour of developing nationwide initiatives.

4. RESULTS

4.1.2. Technology

- Lack of equipment and basic technologies: here, Internet networks are considered the biggest short-term priority in order to re-establish networks, in both national and international scopes, and facilitate e-learning processes.
- Lack of expertise: despite lack of basic technology being considered the biggest priority, some experts pointed out that special efforts need to be made in order to hire or train experts in the use and management of these technologies.
- Limited access to some technologies and equipment: as mentioned before, current limitations for accessing some basic resources makes it very difficult to develop research activities in some specific areas.

Participants in the Focus Group agreed with the factors mentioned by the experts, adding that this situation results in universities seeking to equip themselves.

4.1.3. Economy

- Dollar and oil-dependent economy: in the experts' opinion, and taking into account the current socioeconomic environment at an international level, a highly dependant economy is a big barrier for ensuring growth in the short term, but also a great incentive for developing a more diversified economy based on knowledge and research for ensuring growth in the medium and long term.
- Lack of funds: in this regard, experts considered one of the biggest barriers to be the current laws and the lack of a national strategy for developing research activities and knowledge transfer activities. This makes it impossible to collect funds from the private sector in a sustainable way.

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- Bad management: experts considered that the lack of specialization strategies among universities makes the distribution of funds within the HES very inefficient.

4.1.4. Regulations

- Outdated laws: in experts' opinion HE laws need to be updated and adapted to the current socio-economic and political context.
- Lack of framework for research and technology transfer activities: connected to funding issue mentioned above, experts considered that the lack of specific and updated regulations for these activities is an important barrier for developing competitive research in HEIs in Libya.
- Existing laws against internationalisation and private funding: connected with the outdated laws issues, experts considered this to be a key to solving the specific problem regarding current laws against internationalization and private fundraising.

4.1.5. Society and Culture

- Cultural level and interest in knowledge is low: experts considered that the current situation affected the way society values investing time and resources in HE.
- Lack of connection between the HES and society: many of the experts considered that the HES in Libya is not connected with the needs of the public and private sector and civil society.
- Difficult access to HE: in the experts' opinion, one direct consequence of the conflict is the enormous amount of displaced people around the country. Under this situation it is almost impossible for the students to attend university.

4. RESULTS

Participants from the Focus Group considered that people are interested in knowledge, the problem comes with concrete specialities from Social Sciences and Humanities (such as History and Geography).

On the other hand, participants in the Focus Group believe that the main reason people are not interested in HE is that employability for university students is very low because of the lack of connection with private and public sector needs.

4.2. INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES FOR UNIVERSITIES

This section was dedicated to the identification and evaluation of current and future challenges universities face to ensure their sustainable future. Two main topics are considered here:

- University mission.
- Areas of improvement.

4.2.1. University Mission

In this section, experts were asked about which areas of the traditional university mission should be prioritised, and results showed that Research activities were voted by 41,81% of all experts as first priority, ahead of Teaching activities (32,72%) and Knowledge Transfer activities (25,45%).

4. RESULTS

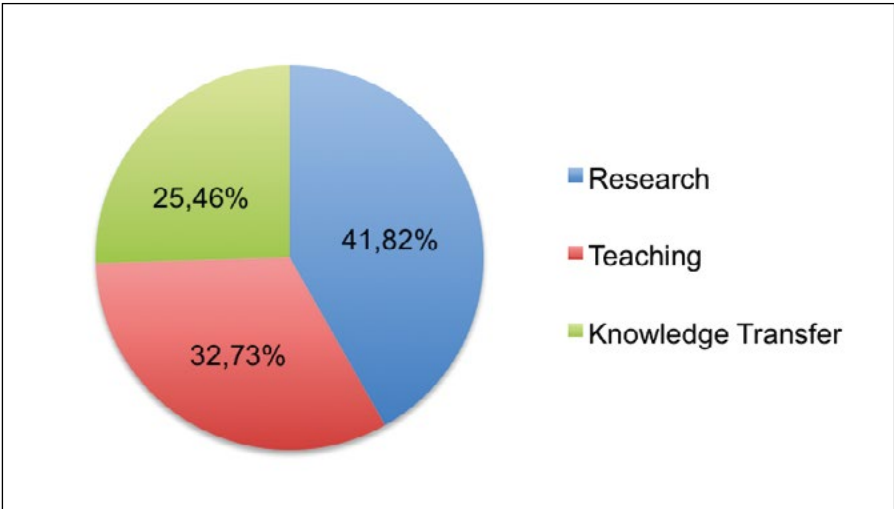


Figure 5. First priority for Libyan universities (Delphi experts' opinion).

During the Focus Group, participants considered that, in the current situation, universities should prioritize Teaching activities (in order to reinforce and consolidate them) ahead of Research. As for the Delphi results, they interpreted the experts' opinion as a shared concern among the experts about historical deficiencies in research strategies and activities within the HES in Libya.

In this section, experts were also asked about their own recommendations in order to improve universities' performance in each of the three areas considered. For the second round, the five most mentioned recommendations by experts during the first round were selected, asking the experts to provide an order of priority for the recommendations in each area. The order of priority set by the experts is the following:

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4.2.1.1. Teaching

- Focus on continuous professional development for teachers: this is, by far, top recommendation, in which they include skills development, capacity building initiatives and motivation strategies.
- Updating teaching materials and curricula: this has been considered an important priority, and both international benchmarking experiences and the connection with national and regional needs were considered very important for developing this updating process experts. During the Focus Group session, participants considered that this priority was connected with program accreditation and quality assurance, also mentioned within the Delphi process.
- Focus on students' needs and expectations: another important priority for the experts was to promote better engagement with students by proposing more interactive and practical learning. In this regard, use of technology for updating teaching methods is also considered a priority, but not for the majority of the experts.

4.2.1.2. Research

- Research priorities and specialization: in the experts' opinion, the biggest priority for Libyan universities in the area of Research is establishing research priorities, promoting specialization strategies within universities and promoting existing research centres and research units. Connected to this, lack of funding has been a big issue mentioned by most of the experts -and also by the participants in the Focus Group- and this specialization strategy is considered by most of them as the best solution to face this situation.
- Promoting the development of masters and doctorate programs: experts considered that, for developing master and doctorate programs, special attention should be paid to the promotion

4. RESULTS

of national/international cooperation in order to develop joint programs.

- Promoting research career development: in the experts' opinion, there is no defined framework for developing a research career within Libyan universities, neither for academics nor students.

4.2.1.3. Knowledge Transfer

- Orienting university activity for covering societal needs: experts considered that the first priority would be orienting Teaching and Research activities to cover the needs of the Libyan institutions, companies and civil society.
- Building strong and sustainable cooperation frameworks: in the experts' opinion, building cooperation frameworks, both at national and international level, is a big priority for ensuring high levels of engagement with society and access to high quality knowledge. Organizing national and international conferences, workshops and seminars is one of the most mentioned strategies for creating and strengthening this cooperation framework.
- Specialization of human resources in knowledge transfer: finally, experts mentioned the specialization of human resources in methods and tools for technology transfer as an important priority for improving the performance of Libyan universities in this type of activities.

4.2.2. Strategic areas of Improvement

Experts were also asked about main strategic areas of improvement for Universities in Libya. The areas considered were the following: Quality Assurance, Funding Model, Use of Technology, Government Bodies, Management, Infrastructure, Engagement with Society (public and

4. RESULTS

private sector and civil society) and Internationalisation. Experts were asked to rank these priorities from 1 to 8 (see figure 6).

- A large majority of the experts considered **Management of the universities**, both at top level and medium level, as the most important area for improvement. **Quality Assurance and Infrastructures** are also considered important areas for improvement.
- On the other hand, participants in the Focus Group agreed with experts' prioritization, but added the **Funding Model** as one of the main areas for improvement.
- **Use of Technology, Government Bodies, Engagement with Society and Internationalisation**, even if they are considered as relevant issues to be taken into account, are not considered as priority areas for improvement in the short-term.

Ranking	Strategic Area	Ranking (mean value)
1 st	Management	2,24
2 nd	Quality Assurance	3,06
3 rd	Infrastructure	3,56
4 th	Funding Model	4,28
5 th	Use of Technology	4,84
6 th	Government Bodies	5,34
7 th	Engagement with Society	5,91
8 th	Internationalisation	5,94

Figure 6. Experts' opinion on main strategic areas of improvement for Universities in Libya (ranked from 1st to 8th).





UNIGOV project meeting in Tunis, 27-28/07

4. RESULTS

4.3. UNIVERSITIES' CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A specific section of the questionnaire was dedicated to collecting the experts' views on the role of their institutions in the socio-economic development of their local, regional and national environment. This section of the questionnaire aimed to look at the perception of the societal benefits of HEIs, focusing on the following areas:

- Universities as engines of economic growth
- Universities as promoters of democratization
- Universities as engines of social cohesion
- Universities as engines of innovation
- Universities as promoters of social mobility

The results show the experts' agreement on the role of the university as "promoter of social mobility" as the main contribution to the socio-economic development of the local, regional and national environment. There is also a high consensus on the role of their institutions "as engine of economic growth". The categories of "social cohesion" and "engine for innovation" are quite balanced, and the only contribution which scores very low is the role of the university as "promoter of democratization".

The second round focused on increasing the information of each of these roles of the university. The following are the results of the different discussions about the results of this second round, coming from the Focus Group.

Regarding the whole issue of the contribution of HEIs to socio-economic development, the participants in the Focus Group pointed out some introductory issues, which were considered important, previous to the assessment of the different roles of the university.

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- Public HEIs in Libya have **no autonomy** and complete **financial dependence** on the Government. Universities are not able to manage the resources they collect (students fees, etc.), as all these resources are centralised by the government.
- The **centralised Libyan economic model** is also fully dependant on oil. Universities are not seen by the government and other stakeholders as economic actors.
- In conclusion, HE is perceived as a supplier of **private benefits** but not of social benefits. Graduates get higher salaries and increase their reputation because of the fact of having a degree. But universities are not usually considered to provide any input in the socio-economic development of the country, which is clearly focused on the oil industry.

Some consequences of this general landscape are:

- Universities have neither research strategy nor specific planning to cover the needs of the local industry.
- Internships are rare and complex, a result of the complex bureaucracy burden and the actual limitations of the system.
- Identifying the Libyan Higher education sector as a real and active contributor of socio-economic development is very complex.

4.3.1. Universities as promoters of Social Mobility

- Delphi experts specified the role of Libyan universities as promoters of Social Mobility in the following aspects:
 - Promoting a culture of acceptance (exchange students programs).
 - Promoting engagement with society through young people (courses of service learning and community engagement).

4. RESULTS

- Promoting the role of the University as a main actor for solving societal problems.
- Increasing awareness about the importance of education (in all levels: primary, secondary, tertiary).
- Participants of the Focus Group agreed with the results of the Delphi and focused specifically on assessing the private benefits of HE which conduct to social mobility. Following this idea:
 - Graduates are expected to earn about 30-40% more than those coming from the Secondary Education.
 - Graduates' reputation is also considered a very relevant factor for Social Mobility in Libyan society.
- In the opinion of most of the Delphi experts, the role of university for solving societal problems (e.g. employability) should be promoted as at the moment it is not clear.

4.3.2. Universities as engines of economic growth

- Experts participating in the Delphi considered the role of Universities as engines of economic growth in second position. The main aspects they identified with this issue:
 - Improving employability among students: curricula and competences better adapted to the market needs.
 - Developing research about labour market trends and needs.
 - Helping universities to perform better in knowledge transfer activities.
 - Facilitating the participation of private universities (with strict state based quality assurance systems).
 - Increasing and diversifying (private, EU projects...) of financial resources.

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- In the Focus Group the experts also show a noticeable agreement on the importance on this issue, and focused the attention on linking educational programmes to human resources' needs of the labour market to meet this challenge.
- There is little experience in this direction in Libya, which has been mainly focused on the oil industry and engineering studies.
- Participants in the Focus Group also saw the need of enhancing enterprise-university cooperation, as this is a clear weakness at the moment in the Libyan HES.

4.3.3. Universities as engines of social cohesion

- The main ideas about how Universities may act as engines of social cohesion in Libya considered the following issues by the Delphi experts:
 - Promoting activities –from the university- in which society could actively participate.
 - Developing communication campaigns and events for promoting the university as a key actor within society.
 - Promoting a culture of acceptance.
 - Strengthening primary and secondary education.
 - Modifying/balancing HE laws and regulations.
- Besides those ideas, participants in the Focus Group added the idea that universities are at the moment isolated from the community. There is no specific strategy to increase the links between universities and communities, and there are different possibilities which may be promoted:
 - Joint workshops on common problems.
 - Trainings for local administrators.

4. RESULTS

- Networking events to increase the relationships with the industry and government bodies.

4.3.4. Universities as engines of innovation

- Experts participating in the Delphi considered the role of Universities as engines of innovation in fourth position. The main aspects that they identified with this issue were:
 - Better funding frameworks (private funding sources).
 - Promoting more flexible centres with a focus on innovation and avoiding bureaucracy.
 - Investing in Human Resources (establishing clear and good incentives).
 - Establishing priorities and setting clear strategies aimed at promoting the role of universities as engine promoters.
- Participants in the Focus Group emphasized the importance of increasing the funding for research and innovation projects, where the industry may play a significant role.
- This funding should come from the government, and the universities should develop a strategy which may facilitate an increased cooperation with the local industry.

4.3.5. Universities as promoters of democratisation

- Delphi experts placed the role of universities as promoters of democratisation in the last position. However, universities played an interesting role in the recent Libyan revolution, especially in the East of the country. At the moment experts identify the following aspects in this area:
 - Presenting the university as an example of democracy.

4. RESULTS

- Promoting independence and individual freedom as core values among the university community (and among society as a whole).
- Creating forums and spaces for sharing ideas and promoting cooperation between East and West.
- Strengthening a culture of dialogue and critical spirit.
- Decreasing the number of universities to decrease regionalism (and tribalism) and increase the culture of exchange and dialogue.
- Participants in the Focus Group added that, in order to present universities as examples of democracy, more democratic/open practices should be implemented within HEIs, which at the moment are not a real practice.
- Democratisation processes at Libyan universities have clear symmetries depending on the region, institutions, etc. There are very little examples, for instance, of open elections for student representatives and their later participation in the governance of the universities.



UNIGOV project meeting in Tunis, 27-28/07



5. CONCLUSIONS

This section is the result of a working session of the UNIGOV consortium held on September 16th, 2016. During this working session representatives from each UNIGOV partner institution discussed the main findings of the study, comparing them with the priorities mentioned by EACEA (2012).

Concerning context analysis findings, it seems that the general climate of uncertainty affecting the whole country makes it very difficult to foresee the driving factors shaping the future of Libya. In this section of the report, Politics and Security factors were identified as the most influencing drivers for the future development of the HES in Libya. However, these drivers are particularly affected by this high level of uncertainty, and socio-political context in Libya may vary dramatically depending on their future development. Taking this into account, UNIGOV consortium decided to set priorities for the development of the HE sector defining two different scenarios:

1. Institutional Changes (IC) Scenario: This scenario represents a reality in which current problems at political and security level are still dominant. National reforms guiding big transformations in the HES (i.e. legal framework) are not feasible, due to the fragmentation of the government and the political instability at national level. In this scenario, it has been considered that the main focus should be on institutional changes that are feasible within the current legal framework.
2. Policy Changes (PC) Scenario: This scenario relies on the weak signals of change which show that some improvements have been

5. CONCLUSIONS

taking place in Libya during the last months, specially at security level with the current conflict coming to an end. The potential end of the conflict also brings a more stable political landscape and is favourable for the development of new policies and a legal framework that could help to modernise the HES in Libya.

Due to the lack of a propitious socio political context, the IC Scenario focuses on priorities for institutional development of the universities through the improvement of management, with a special focus on mid level management. On the other hand, the PC Scenario presents a favourable socio political landscape, which allows to prioritise policy reforms, with special focus on improving governance of the universities. According to this, some concrete priorities have been defined for each scenario:

Priorities in the IC Scenario

- Promoting modernisation of mid-level management in Libyan universities (including research management).
- Implementing continuous professional development programs for university staff.
- Promoting specialization among Libyan universities by defining research strategies for each university.
- Promoting the use of IT, including raising awareness about the benefits that it could bring to the whole university community.
- Promoting curricula development, adapting the programs to international quality standards and linking them to the needs of the Libyan economy and society.
- Improving learning methods, with special focus on the development of online learning platforms and modernisation of teaching materials.
- Improving employability of graduates.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Priorities in the PC Scenario

- Modernizing university governance, with special focus on improving election process and professional requirements for accessing top management level.
- Updating the legal framework of the HES by meeting international standards.
- Redefining the framework and criteria for public funding of the universities.
- Developing funding framework supporting student enrolment in both public and private universities.
- Promoting reconstruction and modernisation of university infrastructures.
- Improving national quality standards in teaching and research.
- Defining national research program (connected with national strategic plans) and legal framework for promoting university-enterprise cooperation.

As a final conclusion, it can be stated that priorities defined in EACEA (2012) and the main findings from this study are quite similar. However, there is an important difference on the great importance that experts are giving to modernising the management of universities. These can be understood as a transversal priority to those defined in EACEA (2012), in particular the one related to university governance. However, uncertainty affecting the socio-political context in Libya could make it very difficult to undertake these changes in a top-down approach. In this context, the ability of each institution in developing bottom-up strategies for improving management will make the difference between Libyan universities.



UNIGOV project meeting in Tunis, 27-28/07



6. REFERENCES

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Workshop on Strategic Plan in Al-Mergib University 1/09



7. ANNEX

a) Delphi Questionnaire

EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN LIBYA – Delphi Questionnaire. 1st Round –

Name:

Surname:

Gender:

Position:

Institution:

Email:

Phone:

A) SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

1. Has the current conflict affected negatively to the development of the Higher Education System (HES) in Libya? Choose from 0 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree)

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please, provide some specific evidence, if any:

7. ANNEX

- 2. Which are the main obstacles to accomplish changes in HES in Libya?** Choose from 0 (no contribution) to 7 (a lot of contribution)

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Politics								
Regulations								
Economy								
Society and Culture								
Technology								

Please, provide some specific examples if any:

Politics	
Regulations	
Economy	
Society and Culture	
Technology	

B) MISSION OF THE UNIVERSITY

- 3. Do you think that universities actively contribute to the socio-economic development of the local, regional and national environment in Libya?** Choose from 0 (no contribution) to 7 (a lot of contribution).

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Universities act as promoter of social mobility								
Universities act as engine of innovation								
Universities act as engine of social cohesion								

7. ANNEX

Universities act as promoter of democratization								
Universities act as engine of economic growth								
Add other kind of contribution if needed								

Please provide some evidence if any:

Universities act as promoter of social mobility	
Universities act as engine of innovation	
Universities act as engine of social cohesion	
Universities act as promoter of democratization	
Universities act as engine of economic growth	
Add other kind of contribution if needed	

4. In your opinion, which are the areas related with the university mission that should be prioritised in the university strategies?

Please provide an order from 1 (first priority) to 3 (last priority)

Teaching ☐

Research ☐

Knowledge Transfer ☐

Please, provide some example, if any:

Please provide up to 3 recommendations for each of the areas considered:

7. ANNEX

Teaching	1
	2
	3
Researching	1
	2
	3
Knowledge transfer	1
	2
	3

C) UNIVERSITY INFRASTRUCTURES, GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING

5. In your opinion, which are the main areas of improvement for the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Libya? *Please provide an order from 1 (first priority) to 7 (last priority).*

- Infrastructure
- Quality assurance
- Management
- Government bodies
- Funding model
- Engagement with society (companies, institutions, civil society,...)
- Internationalisation
- Use of technology

Add any other priority if needed

7. ANNEX

Please provide some comments/recommendations for each of the areas if any:

Infrastructure	
Management	
Government bodies	
Quality assurance	
Funding model	
Engagement with society	
Internationalisation	
Use of technology	

6. In your opinion -and taking into account the year 2025 as time frame- which are the main future challenges Libyan HEIs should face in order to improve its contribution to the socio-economic development of the local, regional and national environment?

Universities act as promoter of social mobility	
Universities act as engine of innovation	
Universities act as engine of social cohesion	
Universities act as promoter of democratisation	
Universities act as engine of economic growth	
Add other kind of contribution if needed	

7. ANNEX

b)

EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN LIBYA

– Delphi Questionnaire. 2nd Round –

Name:

Surname:

Gender:

Position:

Institution:

Email:

Phone:

A) SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

1. Experts considered main obstacles to accomplish changes in HES in Libya in the following order. 0 = most important; 5 = less important

1. Politics
2. Technology
3. Economy
4. Regulations
5. Society and Culture

Do you agree with this order?

Yes ☐ **No** ☐

Comments

7. ANNEX

B) MISSION OF THE UNIVERSITY

2. Experts were asked about the current contribution of their universities in the socio-economic development of the local, regional and national environment. In order of importance, they pointed out the role of their universities as

1. Universities act as promoter of social mobility
2. Universities act as engine of economic growth
3. Universities act as engine of social cohesion
4. Universities act as engine of innovation
5. Universities act as promoter of democratization

Do you agree with this order?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Comments

3. Experts were asked to give 3 recommendations in each of the areas related with university mission (teaching, researching, knowledge transfer), and the repeated ones were the following. Please, provide your own view on which are the top 5 most mentioned recommendations, by putting them in order, being 1 the more relevant and 5 the less relevant.

Teaching

- ☐ Focus on continuous professional development for teachers (skills and capacity).
- ☐ Updating teaching materials and curricula.
- ☐ Focus on program accreditation and quality assurance.

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- Focus on student's needs and expectations, interactivity and practical learning.
- Focus on new technologies for updating teaching methods.

Research

- Promoting research centers and research units.
- Establishing research priorities and promoting specialization strategies within universities.
- Promoting national and international cooperation for developing programmes (master and doctorate) and research projects.
- Promoting research career development for academics and students.
- Promoting the development of masters and doctorate programs.

Knowledge transfer

- Orienting university activity (research and learning) for covering regional needs and serving society (institutions, companies, civil society).
- Promoting the use of new technologies.
- Organizing national and international conferences, workshops and seminars.
- Building strong and sustainable cooperation frameworks at international level.
- Specialization of human resources in knowledge transfer methods and tools.

7. ANNEX

C) UNIVERSITY INFRASTRUCTURES, GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING

4. Experts identified the priority areas of improvement for the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Libya, by giving the following order (1 = first priority; 8 = last priority)

1. Management
2. Quality assurance
3. Infrastructure
4. Funding model
5. Use of technology
6. Government bodies
7. Engagement with society (companies, institutions, civil society,...)
8. Internationalisation

Do you agree with this order?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Comments

5. Experts identified the main future challenges HEIs in Libya should face in order to improve its contribution to the socio-economic development of the local, regional and national environment. Please, provide your own view on which are the more important future challenges, by putting them in order, being 1 the more relevant and 3 the less relevant.

Universities act as promoter of social mobility

- ☐ Empowering young people
- ☐ Ensuring a strong state
- ☐ Promoting new culture of acceptance

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Please, provide any idea on how to solve these challenges, if any

Universities act as engine of innovation

- ☐ Lack of financial resources
- ☐ Developing programs for supporting new and innovative ideas coming from academics and students.
- ☐ Improving management structures and avoid bureaucracy

Please, provide any idea on how to solve these challenges, if any

Universities act as engine of social cohesion

- ☐ Change of admission criteria and funding.
- ☐ Promoting culture of acceptance within the university students.
- ☐ Improving the image of the university within the society.

Please, provide any idea on how to solve these challenges, if any

Universities act as promoter of democratisation

- ☐ Improving democratic values within the society.
- ☐ Promoting dialogue culture among the society.
- ☐ Promoting individual freedom against tribal traditions.

Please, provide any idea on how to solve these challenges, if any

7. ANNEX

Universities act as engine of economic growth

- ☐ Improving employability among graduate students.
- ☐ Creating specializations strategies and teaching and research programs that fit with regional and market needs.
- ☐ Lack of financial resources

Please, provide any idea on how to solve these challenges, if any

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7. ANNEX



Discussion on HE document in Sebha University



UNIGOV project partners from Sebha University during the meeting in Tunis, July 2016



The present report

Exploring the Challenges for Higher Education in Libya

features the main outcomes of this exploratory research study about the future of Higher Education System (HES) in Libya. It aims to identify and evaluate current and future challenges for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and establish priorities and recommendations for ensuring the sustainable development of Libyan HEIs.

For more information about Tempus project UNIGOV, please visit our website:

www.tempus-unigov.eu



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