



Virtual Focus Groups

Structure

3 morning sessions: 18-19-20 of January 2021

Aim

- ✓ Confirm the analysis conducted on the survey responses (June 2019) and integrate missing information
- ✓ Reflect on the university governance dimensions in the Diagnostic Tool
- ✓ Reflect on how to set goals for the future

Timing

1.30 h for discussion



Participants

- University of Mosul
- University of Basrah Oil and Gas
- Al Karkh University for Science
- University of Baghdad
- Wasit University
- Sumer University
- Al-Furat Al-Awsat Technical University
- University of Basrah
- Al-Qasim Green University
- Southern Technical University



Topic 1: Survey responses

Survey delivered by UNIMED to the 10 Universities of the project, directed - depending on the topic - to Presidents and to other departments.

Topics of the survey: general information on the university governance, funding and autonomy, quality assurance, national and international cooperation, university-industry cooperation, future strategies.



Driving Questions

- Are the results still valid for your Institution?
- Is the analysis appropriate?
- What would need to be addressed?



Decision-making process

Most of decisions are taken by Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research or in few cases by the University Council. Universities have only partial autonomy in deciding upon their mission and strategic goals, both short and long term. Even when a University defines its own strategic plan, this is supervised and needs approval by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

University Leaders are not elected but appointed by the Ministry of Higher Education, on the basis of qualification, previous experience, academic title, years of employment, published articles, attendance to international /national conferences, etc.

Academic Autonomy

Universities have partial autonomy (regulated autonomy) in deciding about the structure of curricula, the process of students' admission, the introduction of new programs, the areas of research, human resources policies and on the academic partnership with other institutions. Universities may be willing to build their own strategies and the related action plans, and even if in some cases they could rely on a proper existing regulatory framework, they do not feel to be in the conditions to act autonomously. The first concern is a change in the regulatory framework, where the MoHESR should be the key actor to support the process.

Q. Is our conclusion correct?

Q. How do you see the role of MOHESR in supporting the decision-making power of the university?



Quality Assurance

Most of Universities have a Quality Assurance system and practice monitoring activities. The results of periodical evaluations are sent to the University Council and the MoHESR. Quality departments receive indications and evaluation forms directly from the MoHESR. QA applies on Institutional licensing, accreditation of institutions and programs, assessing learning outcomes, on teaching methodologies, on the research activities and on the facilities.

Even students periodically evaluate their learning experience, their courses, their lecturers.

Corrective actions are undertaken after each evaluation if needed, eventually defining an action plan.

Q. Would you say introducing a new course is complex? How is the process of accreditation working?

Q. Do you feel academic staff is well trained to provide education at the highest quality standards?

Q. What are the regulatory and practical changes needed to help HEIs improve the quality of services?

Students' involvement in the University

In some Universities students are grouped into Students Union but there do not take part in the decision process. Students, alumni and students organizations are not among the stakeholders involved in the university governance.

Q. How do you value increasing the participation of students in university decisions and processes?



International Cooperation

Cooperation agreements include activities such as Training, Scientific cooperation and Research projects, Faculty exchange, scholarships, Lectures exchanges, etc. Most of Universities do not have an International Relation Office coordinating and guiding international activities.

Q. What is missing to increase your international exposure?

Q. What aspect of internationalization is of major interest for your university?

Q. What are the strategic dimensions related to internationalization which you think your university can learn more from the experiences of other countries?

Q. How do you see the role of the MoHESR in relation to international cooperation?



Topic 2:

Governance dimensions of the Diagnostic Tool

The Diagnostic Tool is... a Table, a Matrix!

It allows University Leaders (at different levels) to identify the dimensions and subdimensions of governance in need for improvement, starting from a self-evaluation of current governance arrangements at each HEIs. Based on the results of the assessment, preliminary training needs will emerge.

The Matrix reports:

(Horizontally) Strategic activities: TEACHING, RESEARCH, THIRD MISSION

(Vertically) Governance dimensions: AUTONOMY, ACCOUNTABILITY, MANAGEMENT

TECHNIQUES and PARTICIPATION and related subdimensions. The self-assessment requires to indicate for each dimension a simple indicator (None, Low, Medium, High, Full).



In this way, the tool enables a two-dimensional evaluation: vertically, concerning governance in each strategic activity, or horizontally for each dimension of governance.

The Diagnostic Tool as it was designed in the UNIGOV project will be adapted to fit the current situation (i.e. working online) and restructured into an online tool.



AUTONOMY

To what extent the HEI is able to decide freely in relation to the central authority. Autonomy in deciding the organizational structure, academic autonomy, HR management, the allocation of financial resources.

ACCOUNTABILITY

To what extent the HEI is accountable. The dimension measures the degree of effectiveness in data reporting, i.e. the ability to make available in a clear and transparent way relevant information. Key indicators are set to allow HEIs to be clear and transparent in reporting intermediate outcomes.

MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

To what extent the HEI is able to effectively manage its performance and activities. It relates to QA system, performance planning and monitoring, evaluation system.

PARTICIPATION

To what extent stakeholders are engaged in the strategic decision-making process. Internal stakeholders such as students, academic staff, administrative staff, unions, and external stakeholders such as central and local authorities, research and consultant institutes, donors, international organizations, private firms.

Q. How do you rate your knowledge of these governance dimensions?



Topic 3: Objectives for the future

Starting from the Dimensions on the Diagnostic Tool, it is important to set objectives for the future, which will drive the Capacity Building action and the progressing of the project. The self-evaluation conducted with the Diagnostic Tool will support the identification of the training needs but would also be the starting point for the drafting of your institutional action plan. **You will be in charge to set your own goals for the future.**

It is very important to understand how strategic planning can be put into practice, and responds to the clear and real specific needs of each university. Each University will set their own goals and define a road for improvement. These goals should be inspired by effective governance models but should be coherent and adapted upon your specific context, while adhering to a system of rules and practices regulating the mission of the HE system as a whole at national level in cooperation with the Ministry of HE and SR.

Transparency, communication, responsibility are therefore essential factors for universities that acquire greater autonomy, be it academic, financial, related to human resource management, etc.

Q. How to you see your HEI two years from now?



Innovative Governance Practices
in the Higher Education Institutions in Iraq

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