HIGHER EDUCATION IN
Libya

I. Overall description
II. Current challenges and needs
III. Bibliographical references and websites
The higher education system in Libya

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>University (Jameea)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Technical College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bachelor (Al-Éjza Al-Jameaya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bachelor (Al-Éjza Al-Jameaya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bachelor (Al-Éjza Al-Jameaya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Master (Al-Éjza Al-Alea / Al-Majestair)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bachelor (Al-Éjza Al-Jameaya)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>University (Jameea)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Technical College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bachelor (Al-Éjza Al-Jameaya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bachelor (Al-Éjza Al-Jameaya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bachelor (Al-Éjza Al-Jameaya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Master (Al-Éjza Al-Alea / Al-Majestair)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bachelor (Al-Éjza Al-Jameaya)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field of study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;&gt;&gt; Various fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;&gt;&gt; Dentistry, pharmacy, veterinary medicine, engineering, architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;&gt;&gt; Medicine, surgery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;&gt;&gt; Various fields</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECTS</th>
<th>Credits according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programmes</th>
<th>Regulated at National Level</th>
<th>Decided at Institutional Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>▲</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>△</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I. Overall description

1. Major characteristics of tertiary education in the country

History

The establishment of the first Libyan University in 1955 was a major achievement at an early stage of independence. The Faculty of Arts, which was opened in the city of Benghazi, constituted the centre of all Libyan Universities. Between 1962 and 1967, faculties of Economics & Commerce, Law, Sciences, Agriculture, Engineering, and Education were successively opened in the cities of Benghazi and Tripoli.

The Libyan University witnessed fundamental changes in the early 1970s with the establishment of faculties of Medicine, Arabic & Islamic Studies, Petroleum Engineering and Mineralogy in Tripoli and Benghazi. Furthermore, the Libyan University was divided into two separate universities: the University of Tripoli, later called El-Fateh University (located in Tripoli) and the University of Benghazi, called Gar-Yunis University (located in Benghazi). More universities were established in different parts of the country in order to meet the increasing social and economic demands and changes, which the country was undergoing, and to adapt to the rise in the number of students at university level. In 1999, there were 14 universities with a total of 90 faculties. In addition by 1998/99, 51 higher technical and vocational institutes were established.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the higher education level in 2003/04 comprised seven main universities, three universities of special nature, and 15 "departmental universities". They were distributed among the country's administrative districts in addition to 65 higher technical and vocational centres.

Legislation covering the field of tertiary education

The present structure of the Educational System was approved in 1984.

Higher education is governed by the General Peoples' Committee for Education & Scientific Research (GPCE&SR). A new law, entitled "Law No. 18 for Education" concerning the higher education sector in Libya was approved by the General Peoples' Congress in January 2010. The law determines that the higher education sector comprises public and private universities, technical colleges, and academies. The law also stipulates the conditions and criteria for the establishment of public and private institutions.

Within the GPCE&SR three bodies are responsible for the supervision of and the coordination among higher education institutions: (1) the National Committee for Universities, (2) the National Committee for Technical & Vocational Education, and (3) the National Committee for Private Education. In addition, the Center for Accreditation & Quality Assurance for Educational Institutions is responsible for the recognition and equivalence of diplomas, accreditation, and quality assurance of the public and private higher education institutions.

The National Authority for Scientific Research supervises the administration and finances of scientific research.

Types of tertiary education institutions, programmes and qualifications

There are three types of tertiary institutions in Libya:

1. Universities

Universities offer three types of qualifications. The first degree offered is the bachelor degree (Al-Ejaza Al-Jameaya) which requires four years of study in most programmes after obtaining the secondary school certificate. Bachelor degrees in dentistry, pharmacy, veterinary medicine, engineering and architecture all require five years of study, while the bachelor degree in medicine and surgery requires six years of study. Universities also offer programmes leading to Master's degree in most specializations (Al-Ejaza Al-Alea or Al-Majestair), which requires, on average, 2-3 years of study after obtaining the bachelor degree. Obtaining a Ph.D. degree (Al-Ejaza Al-Dakeka or Doctora) in selected specializations and at certain universities requires three to four years of study. According to regulations set by GPCE&SR, Master's and Ph.D. programmes have to be approved first by the National Committee for Universities, which also sets the admission requirements for both degrees.

There are seven general universities and three universities of special nature in Libya. These universities are distributed across all regions of the country (Libya's territory comprises about 1.7 million square kilometres with about six million inhabitants). In addition, there are 4
accredited private universities.

There are about 340,000 students enrolled in all universities in Libya in the academic year 2008/09, about 57% of them are female, and more than 90% are enrolled in public universities.

2. Technical Colleges (Kuliat Tekania)

In November 2009, 16 high vocational centres and institutions were converted into high technical colleges. These colleges offer "technical bachelor degrees" (Bakalaurius Tekani) in certain specialities, which requires three years of study after obtaining the secondary school certificate.

3. Higher Vocational Institutions (Maahed Mehania Ulia)

Currently, there are 63 high vocational institutions in Libya. These institutions offer programmes in many vocational specialities for a period of three years after obtaining the secondary school certificate. Graduates of these institutions are awarded high vocational/technical diplomas (Deplom Mehani/ Tekani Alee).

For students' admission to tertiary institutions, the GPCE&SR regulates and determines annually the requirements, such as student's specialization in the intermediate education level and GPA (grade point average).

2. Distribution of responsibilities

Universities, technical colleges, academies and research centres are established by decisions issued by the General Peoples' Committee according to suggestion by the GPCE&SR. These decisions should indicate universities' branches and their components, technical colleges and research centres and their locations.

By determining the composition of departments in colleges and technical colleges, GPCE&SR insures that all specializations are covered, that departments and their specializations are integrated in university and college systems, and that they are in accordance with available human and natural resources and with national development and economy plans.

Public universities are autonomous to some extent. They operate under the supervision of the "National Committees of Universities", which is responsible for implementing the GPCE&SR policy for higher education and acts as a coordinator between these universities. The universities' and faculties' "peoples' committees", which are headed by the chancellor and the deans respectively, are responsible for managing the universities and the faculties and academic decision-making. At the university level, these committees include the deans of faculties, a students' representative and a representative of the university staff union. At the faculty level, these committees include the heads of the departments, a representative of the students and a representative of the faculty staff union. Universities appoint and promote academic staff, and approve curricula.

In consultation with GPCE&SR, the "General Peoples' Committee" regulates the management of higher education institutions, students' admissions, and tuition fees.

3. Governing bodies of the Higher Education Institutions

The national committee for universities, the national committee for vocational & technical education and the national committee for private education are responsible for implementing the GPCE&SR regulations and decrees at their respective institutions.

Each public university is headed by the Chancellor (the "Secretary of the Peoples' Committee") and is governed by the "Peoples' Committee" in which each faculty is represented by its Secretary (the dean). These committees are responsible for implementing the general policy of higher education set by the GPCE&SR at the department, faculty and university levels. The "Secretary of Peoples' Committee" is appointed through a "cabinet" decree upon a recommendation of the secretary of GPCE&SR. The deans of the faculties and technical colleges are appointed by the secretary of GPCE&SR.

The "Peoples' Committees" are responsible for the quality of services offered by university, faculty or technical college (programmes, curricula, teaching, examinations, infrastructure and institute's budget).

A Private university is headed by the university chancellor, and each university is required to form a university board, of which one member is appointed by GPCE&SR.

5. Students' contributions and financial support

Higher Education is completely financed by GPCE&SR, except for private universities. The GPCE&SR allocates the annual budget for each university and technical college according to the budget suggested by these institutions, and according to the criteria set by the GPCE&SR, such as the institution's population, current infrastructure, needed construction and
facilities. Students' fees are very small. Students pay only registration fees in the beginning of the academic year or semester. Other limited financial resources are generated through grants, investments, and services provided to the public.

In contrast, private higher institutions are self-financed. Their main financial resources are from students' fees and services provided to the public.

6. Licensing, quality assurance and accreditation of institutions and/or programmes

The accreditation and quality assurance centre was established in 2006 aiming at designing and implementing a system for evaluation, accreditation and quality assurance in public and private higher education institutions. In terms of its administration and finances, the centre is autonomous, but is supervised by the GPCE&SR. All higher education institutions are required to establish a quality assurance office in order to work closely with the centre and develop a culture of quality at these institutions by organising workshops, seminars, conferences and publications. The centre has already published the first accreditation and quality assurance standards for Libyan higher education institutions. All private universities have been subject to evaluation according to these standards. So far, only four of them have been accredited accordingly.

7. Admission

All students are eligible to study in higher education institutions. Every year, the "General Peoples’ Committee" determines the regulations for students' admission to higher education institutions by taking into consideration the results of the examinations of the "Secondary School Leaving Certificate", needs of society and institutions' capacities, as well as the students' specializations and GPA at the secondary level. Currently, the secondary education level consists of six branches or specializations: life sciences, engineering, basic sciences, economy, social sciences and languages (Arabic, English, French, Hausa & Swahili). According to these criteria, students can apply to the different departments or specializations at public or private universities, technical colleges or high vocational institutions. For admission to post graduate studies, students are required to have a BSc or BA degree, take a placement exam or be interviewed.

8. Organisation of the academic year

The higher education institutions are responsible for determining the length, beginning and end of the academic year. Some institutions follow the semester system and others follow the whole academic year system. The academic year starts at the beginning of October and ends in June or early July. Some private universities provide a summer semester. One semester usually lasts for 16 weeks and ends with an exam period, while the end-of-year exam is more formal, which means that exams and committees are scheduled at faculty and department levels.

9. Curriculum content

Traditionally, programmes and curricula are developed and approved by faculties and universities. However, recently there has been a trend towards centralising the reform of programmes and curricula, which aims at standardising about 60-70% of the content of all subjects at the university level. This was done through meetings carried out at various universities and with the heads of the various fields of specialization of the departments.

Generally, private universities follow curricula of public universities.

Programmes and curricula in technical colleges and higher vocational institutions are more flexible. During a whole-academic-year system, students are required to study 10-12 courses each year, while in the semester system, a total of 130-136 credit hours are required on average for the Bachelor degree, which may go up to 150 credit hours in the field of engineering.

10. Assessment, progression, certification and degree

Exams are the most common form of assessing students' performance at the higher education level. Other assessment types, such as accomplishing projects, term papers, or group work are used, depending on the nature and level of the course and number of students registered. Usually, there are two term or year exams and a final besides homework in order to assess students' performance in each course. In the whole-academic-year-system students are required to pass all courses of the year to progress to the next year. University or faculty regulations may allow students to retake the final exam before the beginning of the following year if they fail in a certain number of courses and they can progress to the next year if they fail for a second time in only one or two courses. Students take examinations for these past courses together
with the finals of the new academic year.

There are two types of semester systems in Libya. (1) A fixed semester, where all students at a certain semester take the same pre-determined courses. Assessment and progress are similar to those in the whole-academic-year system. (2) The other type allows students to select the courses according to their progress, their interest, the courses they already passed, and according to the courses offered and pre-requisite requirements.

Degrees are awarded when students have passed all required courses in a specific field of study. At university level, students are awarded a Bachelor degree (Ejaza Jameaya) in science or arts depending on their specialization. At technical colleges, students are awarded a "Technical Bachelor" degree, while students at higher vocational institutions are awarded a high diploma. Post-graduate studies were introduced at Libyan universities in 1973. Most universities have Master degree programmes in most specializations. Students are awarded a Master degree (Al-Ejaza Al-Alea / Al-Majestair) in an area of specialization. Ph.D. (Al-Ejaza Al-Dakeka / Doctora) programmes are offered only at certain institutions.

11. Academic staff

Academic staff are required to hold a Master or Ph.D. degree from institutions recognized by GPCE&SR. The following ranks are used for academic staff:

1. Assistant lecturer: The first rank for academic staff holding a Master degree.

2. Lecturer: The first rank for academic staff holding a Ph.D. degree and the second for Master degree holders after four years of teaching as an assistant lecturer and at least one publication.

3. Assistant professor: Academic staff with Ph.D. degree, three years of experience as lecturer and at least three publications. Or academic staff with Master degree, four years of experience as lecturer and at least three publications.

4. Associate professor: Academic staff with Ph.D. degree, four years of experience as assistant professor and at least four publications. Or academic staff with Master degree, six years of experience as assistant professor and at least five publications.

5. Professor: Academic staff with Ph.D. degree, four years of experience as associate professor and at least five publications.

At university level, faculty members are appointed by the university chancellor based on the recommendations by the concerned department and faculty. Appointments at technical colleges, higher institutions and scientific research centres are made by the GPCE&SR based on the recommendations of the National Committee for Technical Education and National Authority for Scientific Research. In private higher institutions, academic staff are appointed through contracts for one semester, one year or longer.

12. Research activities

Research is an integral part of academic staff responsibilities at universities. This is done through research activities carried out by individuals or research groups of academic staff to meet promotion requirements, for professional development or part or their post-graduate duties. Universities and other higher education institutions participate in solving social, economical and technological problems and challenges through scientific research. In general, research is government funded by a very high percentage. In addition, the National Authority for Scientific Research (NASR), through various research centres, is supervising scientific research in Libya. Many university staff members participate in research activities carried out by these centres.

13. University-enterprise cooperation

Cooperation between universities and business and industry sectors is very weak. In fact, one major criticism on higher education is the failure to meet the needs of the job market and to respond to the changes of the economy in the country. The industry has never been represented in the management of higher education institutions. However, some faculties and higher education institutions keep contacts with industry and service sectors through students' projects and internships.

14. International cooperation

Libyan universities and other higher education institutions have contacts and cooperate with many Arab, African and European institutions. In addition, GPCE&SR regularly send the best students to study abroad with full scholarships to obtain Master and Ph.D. degrees. Currently, more than 10,000 students are studying abroad in more than 30 countries, in fields, such as medicine, engineering, basic sciences, social sciences, economics and many other specializations. Many Libyan universities and higher education institutions have agreements
and memoranda of understanding with other universities and higher education institutions abroad. Some of these agreements and MoU include the establishment of joint programmes, the exchange of students and staff members, and the exchange of teaching materials.

II. Current challenges and needs

Higher education in Libya is facing some major challenges which could impact the near future. These challenges include:

1. Meeting the increased demands for quality improvement in higher education.
2. Raising the quality of higher education graduates and their abilities to take personal career initiatives.
3. Accreditation and quality assurance of higher education institutions and programmes.
4. Financing and governance of higher education institutions.
5. Increasing the use of IT in higher education institutions.
6. Strengthening scientific research in higher education institutions.

III. Bibliographical references and websites


General Peoples' Committee (2010), Decision No. (501) By Law For Organization of Higher Education.

General Peoples' Committee for Education & Scientific Research website: www.gpce.gov.ly


General Peoples' Congress (2010) Law No. 18 for Education.


THE APPROACH AND DATA COLLECTION HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED IN CLOSE CO-OPERATION WITH EURYDICE, THE NETWORK ON EDUCATION SYSTEMS AND POLICIES IN EUROPE.

THE EXECUTIVE AGENCY WORKS UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE COMMISSION DIRECTORATES GENERAL.

This publication is made within the framework of the European Union TEMPUS programme which is funded by the EU in co-operation with Libya.

This document reflects the views of the Tempus Office and the Authorities of the country concerned. The European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

For further information:
- **Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)**
  **Unit P10 - Tempus and Bilateral Cooperation with Industrialised Countries**
  **Postal address**: Tempus Programme Avenue du Bourget 1 (BOUR 02/017) B-1140 Brussels, Belgium
  **Contact**: EACEA-Tempus-Info@ec.europa.eu

- **National Tempus Office Libya**
  **Postal address**: Libya National Tempus Office, Ministry of Education, Technical Cooperation Office, Zawyat Eddahmani, P.O. Box 397, Tripoli - Libya
  **Contact**: nto.libya@gmail.com
  **Web site**: forthcoming

**Last update**: January 2011.

---

1 Ali Al-Gosbi, Suleiman Khoja (NTO Libya).