United Nations Development Programme / Regional Bureau for Arab States (UNDP / RBAS)

UNDP HIGHER EDUCATION PROJECT

“Enhancement of Quality Assurance and Institutional Planning in Arab Universities”

Phase I

1/1/2002 (30 months) 30/6/2004

Independent Evaluation
(December 2004)

Phase II

Started June 2005 (42 months) December 31, 2008

UNDP / RBAS acknowledges with appreciation significant funding support for phase II from BMZ (Germany) and GoF (Finland)
PROJECT’S AIMS AND COMPONENTS

To introduce:
- on a regional level,
- through voluntary partnership with leading Arab universities,
- through the efforts of the academic representatives of participating universities
- backed by intensive training and advisory support from project

Three independent instruments of quality assurance and enhancement:

A. EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS
   Through internal and external (peer) evaluation

B. ADMINISTRATION OF INTERNATIONAL TESTS
   For assessing the performance of students of reviewed programs
   (Major Field Test – ETS)

C. DEVELOPMENT OF STATISTICAL DATABASES
   For participating universities in accordance with commonly agreed data definitions and specifications
MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS - 1

A. Evaluation of Academic Programs
(Cycle duration = 15 months)

- **Cycle 1** (2002-2003): review of Computer Science programs in 15 universities

- **Cycle 2** (2003–2004): review of Business Administration programs in 16 universities

- **Cycle 3** (2005-2006): review of Education programs in 23 universities

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS - 2

B. TESTING PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS OF REVIEWED PROGRAMS
(using Major Field Test, ETS)

- **Cycle 3** (2006-2007) Administration of a jointly developed ETS-Project test in Education to 1500 senior students in Education in 24 universities (May-June 2007). Joint ownership
- **Cycle 4**: Administration of Global Test in Major Studies (GTMS) to 1500 senior students in Engineering, in 20 Arab universities.

C. STATISTICAL DATABASE DEVELOPMENT

- **One cycle** (2002-2004) Statistical database development in 15 universities in accordance with common data definitions and specifications (about 500,000 students). Regional report this year.
EVALUATION OF PROGRAMMES
OUTCOMES – 1
INTRODUCING METHODOLOGIES OF PROGRAMME REVIEW

- An adaptation of QAA (UK) Academic Subject Review (ASR). Our own Handbook
- Three stages:
  - Self Evaluation: by the program providers
  - External evaluation: By peer reviewers (on-site visits) with active participation of university representatives
  - Final reporting: by peer reviewers

- Introduced to /implemented by 36 leading universities. With very few exceptions, as their first experience in professional programme review (self-evaluation followed by peer review and reporting)

- Generic: discipline-independent, system independent, supportive of other methods (e.g. accreditation)

- Underpinned by outcome-based approach to learning: an instrument of quality assurance and programme reform

- First step towards institutional evaluation
OUTCOMES - 2
GENERATING AGENDAS FOR SELF-IMPROVEMENT AND REFORM

For each university: An individual review report (54):
- Evidence-based analysis and assessment
- Identification of weaknesses and strengths
- Graded judgements (comparisons)
- Graded sub aspects (Special indicators)
- Recommended improvements
- Awareness / internal action in most. Follow up action taken by about 1/3. Depends on resources. Need for development support (e.g. national / regional fund, Tempus).

For the region: An overview regional report for each subject (3):
- Patterns of strength and weakness
- Comparative charts of graded judgements and special indicators
- Recommended areas for reform through regional collaboration and consultation
- Enables development by academics / associations in the field of subject – based benchmark statements, guidelines. Much needed.

Education cycle charts
OUTCOME 3
CAPACITY BUILDING

- Capacity Building is integrated into the structure of the Project’s review cycle. A means and an outcome
  - Three training workshops on internal / external evaluation. Technical advisory support provided throughout cycle.
  - Trained representatives take lead in self evaluation, preparation of self evaluation documents, hosting of peer review missions.
  - Selected group from trained trained representatives (about 2/3) take part in review missions in other Arab countries (2 out of four reviewers)
- About 110 trained representatives. Cohort of 71 fully experienced (i.e. including peer reviewing) first three cycles to exceed 100 after engineering cycle. First regional cohort.
- Most playing a leading role in developing quality systems in faculties and universities / countries. Leadership network
Structure of Review Cycle (15-18 months)

Workshop 1: Training on Method

Advisory Support

Final SEDs

Selection of Regional Reviewers

Review Missions to Universities

Self-Evaluation Process

Self-Evaluation Documents (SEDs)

Workshop 2: Group Review of Progress

Workshop 3: Training on External Review

Final Reports
EXAMPLE OF REGIONAL AGENDAS
EDUCATION (1/7 of students)

Quality / Resources gaps:
- Quality gap: none of 12 teacher’s training programmes graded good.
- Resources gap: > 50% of universities need improved resources.
- Regional message (as in previous cycles): more investment in HE. At least doubling expenditure / student (using QA considerations as a guide)

Regional consultation / collaboration, benchmark statements / guidelines needed on:
- Curricula:
  - weak theoretical foundations of teacher’s training.
  - Weak application of theory to context of Education
- Assessment of students is weakest link: (need wider range of methods: cognitive skills vs memory recall, moderation, item writing).
- State of Arabic text books and journals: minimum regional specifications needed

Follow-ups:
- Association of Arab Universities + UNESCO + ALECSO.
- Jordan: Conference to be convened by M of HE
FULLY-TRAINED QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEWERS
REGIONAL PARTICIPATION

• 36 leading universities in 14 Arab countries (36 university coordinators).

• 108 participating academics, of whom, 71 are fully trained QA reviewers.

Table: Regional Participation
NUMBER OF UNIVERSITIES IN EACH COUNTRY
TESTING OF STUDENTS

CS + BA
THANK YOU